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DRAKE
IN ENGLISH EPIC
BOOKS IV-XII

ALFRED NOYES

Noyes
Frank 1908
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PRESS OPINIONS.

Times.—Mr Noyes's new volume proves that his fund of music is wellnigh inexhaustible.

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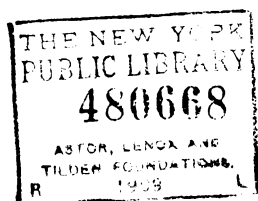
BOOKS IV.-XII.

BY
ALFRED NOYES

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MCMVIII

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P. 2



D R A K E.



BOOK IV.

DAWN, everlasting and almighty Dawn,
Hailed by ten thousand names of death and
birth,
Who, chiefly by thy name of Sorrow, seem'st
To half the world a sunset, God's great Dawn,
Fair light of all earth's partings till we meet
Where Dawn and sunset, mingling East and
West,
Shall make in some deep Orient of the soul
One radiant Rose of Love for evermore;
Teach me, oh teach to bear thy broadening
light,

A

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Ver. 20/04
Garema

Thy deepening wonder, lest as old dreams
fade

With love's unfaith, like wasted hours of
youth

And dim illusions vanish in thy beam,
Their rapture and their anguish break that
heart

Which loved them, and must love for ever
now.

Let thy great sphere of splendour, ring by
ring

For ever widening, draw new seas, new skies,
Within my ken ; yet, as I still must bear
This love, help me to grow in spirit with
thee.

Dawn on my song which trembles like a
cloud

Pierced with thy beauty. Rise, shine, as of
old

Across the wondering ocean in the sight

Of those world-wandering mariners, when
earth

Rolled flat up to the Gates of Paradise,
And each slow mist that curled its gold away
From each new sea they furrowed into pearl
Might bring before their blinded mortal eyes
God and the Glory. Lighten as on the soul
Of him that all night long in torment dire,
Anguish and thirst unceasing for thy ray
Upon that lonely Patagonian shore
Had lain as on the bitterest coasts of Hell.
For all night long, mocked by the dreadful
peace

Of world-wide seas that darkly heaved and
sank

With cold recurrence, like the slow sad breath
Of a fallen Titan dying all alone
In lands beyond all human loneliness,
While far and wide glimmers that broken
target

Hurled from tremendous battle with the gods,
And, as he breathes in pain, the chain-mail
rings
Round his broad breast a muffled rattling
make
For many a league, so seemed the sound of
waves
Upon those beaches—there, be-mocked all
night,
Beneath Magellan's gallows, Drake had
watched
Beside his dead; and over him the stars
Paled as the silver chariot of the moon
Drove, and her white steeds ramped in a
fury of foam
On splendid peaks of cloud. The *Golden
Hynde*
Slept with those other shadows on the bay.
Between him and his home the Atlantic
heaved;

And, on the darker side, across the strait
Of starry sheen that softly rippled and flowed
Betwixt the mainland and his isle, it seemed
Death's Gates indeed burst open. The night
yawned

Like a foul wound. Black shapes of the
outer dark

Poured out of forests older than the world;
And, just as reptiles that take form and hue,
Speckle and blotch, in strange assimilation
From thorn and scrub and stone and the
waste earth

Through which they crawl, so that almost
they seem

The incarnate spirits of their wilderness,
Were these most horrible kindred of the
night.

Æonian glooms unfathomable, grim aisles,
Grotesque, distorted boughs and dancing
shades

Out-belched their dusky brood on the dim
shore ;

Monsters with sooty limbs, red-raddled eyes,
And faces painted yellow, women and men ;
Fierce naked giants howling to the moon,
And loathlier Gorgons with long snaky tresses
Pouring vile purple over pendulous breasts
Like wine-bags. On the mainland beach
they lit

A brushwood fire that reddened creek and
cove

And lapped their swarthy limbs with hideous
tongues

Of flame ; so near that by their light Drake
saw

The blood upon the dead man's long black
hair

Clotting corruption. The fierce funeral pyre
Of all things fair seemed rolling on that
shore ;

BOOK IV.

7

And in that dull red battle of smoke and
flame,

While the sea crunched the pebbles, and
dark drums

Rumbled out of the gloom as if this earth
Had some Titanic tigress for a soul
Purring in forests of Eternity

Over her own grim dreams, his lonely spirit
Passed through the circles of a world-wide
waste

Darker than ever Dante roamed. No gulf
Was this of fierce harmonious reward,
Where Evil moans in anguish after death,
Where all men reap as they have sown,
where gluttons

Gorge upon toads and usurers gulp hot
streams

Of molten gold. This was that Malebolge
Which hath no harmony to mortal ears,
But seems the reeling and tremendous dream

Of some omnipotent madman. There he saw
The naked giants dragging to the flames
Young captives hideous with a new despair :
He saw great craggy blood-stained stones
 upheaved

To slaughter, saw through mists of blood
 and fire

The cannibal feast prepared, saw filthy hands
Rend limb from limb, and almost dreamed
 he saw

Foul mouths a-drip with quivering human
 flesh

And horrible laughter in the crimson storm
That clomb and leapt and stabbed at the
 high heaven

Till the whole night seemed saturate with
 red.

And all night long upon the *Golden Hynde*,
A cloud upon the waters, brave Tom Moone

Watched o'er the bulwarks for some dusky
 plunge
To warn him if that savage crew should
 mark
His captain and swim over to his isle.
Whistle in hand he watched, his boat well
 ready,
His men low-crouched around him, swarthy
 faces
Grim-chinned upon the taffrail, muttering
 oaths
That trampled down the fear i' their bristly
 throats,
While at their sides a dreadful hint of steel
Sent stray gleams to the stars. But little
 heed
Had Drake of all that menaced him, though
 oft
Some wandering giant, belching from the
 feast,

All blood-besmeared, would come so near he
heard

His heavy breathing o'er the narrow strait.
Yet little care had Drake, for though he sat
Bowed in the body above his quiet dead,
His burning spirit wandered through the
wastes,

Wandered through hells behind the apparent
hell,

Horrors immeasurable, clutching at dreams
Found fair of old, but now most foul. The
world

Leered at him through its old remembered
mask

Of beauty: the green grass that clothed the
fields

Of England (shallow, shallow fairy dream!)
What was it but the hair of dead men's
graves,

Rooted in death, enriched with all decay?

BOOK IV.

11

And like a leprosy the hawthorn bloom
Crawled o'er the whitening bosom of the
spring;

And bird and beast and insect, ay and man,
How fat they fed on one another's blood!
And Love, what faith in Love, when spirit
and flesh

Are found of such a filthy composition?
And Knowledge, God, his mind went reeling
back

To that dark voyage on the deadly coast
Of Panama, where one by one his men
Sickened and died of some unknown disease,
Till Joseph, his own brother, in his arms
Died; and Drake trampled down all tender
thought,

All human grief, and sought to find the
cause,

For his crew's sake, the ravenous unknown
cause

Of that fell scourge. There, in his own dark
cabin,

Lit by the wild light of the swinging lanthorn,
He laid the naked body on that board
Where they had supped together. He took
the knife

From the ague-stricken surgeon's palsied
hands,

And while the ship rocked in the eternal seas
And dark waves lapped against the rolling hulk
Making the silence terrible with voices,
He opened his own brother's cold white corse,
That pale deserted mansion of a soul,
Bidding the surgeon mark, with his own eyes,
While yet he had strength to use them, the
foul spots,

The swollen liver, the strange sodden heart,
The yellow intestines. Yea, his dry lips
hissed

There in the stark face of Eternity

“Seest thou? Seest thou? Knowest thou
what it means?”

Then, like a dream up-surged the belfried
night

Of Saint Bartholomew, the scented palaces
Whence harlots leered out on the twisted
streets

Of Paris, choked with slaughter! Europe
flamed

With human torches, living altar candles,
Lighted before the Cross where men had
hanged

The Christ of little children. Cirque by
cirque

The world-wide hell reeled round him, East
and West,

To where the tortured Indians worked the will
Of lordly Spain in golden-famed Peru.

“God, is thy world a madman’s dream?” he
groaned:

And suddenly, the clamour on the shore
Sank and that savage horde melted away
Into the midnight forest as it came,
Leaving no sign, save where the brushwood
fire

Still smouldered like a ruby in the gloom;
And into the inmost caverns of his mind
That other clamour sank, and there was
peace.

"A madman's dream," he whispered, "Ay,
to me

A madman's dream," but better, better far
Than that which bears upon its awful gates,
Gates of a hell defined, unalterable,
Abandon hope all ye who enter here!

Here, here at least the dawn hath power to
bring

New light, new hope, new battles. Men may
fight

And sweep away that evil, if no more,

At least from the small circle of their swords;
Then die, content if they have struck one
stroke

For freedom, knowledge, brotherhood; one
stroke

To hasten that great kingdom God proclaims
Each morning through the trumpets of the
Dawn.

And far away, in Italy, that night
Young Galileo, gazing upward, heard
The self-same whisper from the abyss of stars
Which lured the soul of Shakespeare as he
lay

Dreaming in May-sweet England, even now,
And with its infinite music called once more
The soul of Drake out to the unknown West.

Now like a wild rose in the fields of heaven
Slipt forth the slender fingers of the Dawn

And drew the great grey Eastern curtains
back

From the ivory saffroned couch. Rosily slid
One shining foot and one warm rounded knee
From silken coverlets of the tossed-back
clouds.

Then, like the meeting after desolate years,
Face to remembered face, Drake saw the
Dawn

Step forth in naked splendour o'er the sea ;
Dawn, bearing still her rich divine increase
Of beauty, love, and wisdom round the world ;
The same, yet not the same. So strangely
gleamed

Her pearl and rose across the sapphire waves
That scarce he knew the dead man at his
feet.

His world was made anew. Strangely his
voice

Rang through that solemn Eden of the morn

Calling his men, and stranger than a dream
Their boats black-blurred against the crimson

East,

Or flashing misty sheen where'er the light
Smote on their smooth wet sides, like seraph
ships

Moved in a dewy glory towards the land;
Their oars of glittering diamond broke the sea
As by enchantment into burning jewels
And scattered rainbows from their flaming
blades.

The clear green water lapping round their
prows,

The words of sharp command as now the
keels

Crunched on his lonely shore, and the follow-
ing wave

Leapt slapping o'er the sterns, in that new
light

Were more than any miracle. At last

Drake, as they grouped a little way below
The crumbling sandy cliff whereon he stood,
Seeming to overshadow them as he loomed
A cloud of black against the crimson sky,
Spoke, as a man may hardly speak but once :
“ My seamen, oh my friends, companions,
 kings ;

For I am least among you, being your cap-
 tain ;

And ye are men, and all men born are kings,
By right divine, and I the least of these
Because I must usurp the throne of God
And sit in judgment, even till I have set
My seal upon the red wax of this blood,
This blood of my dead friend, ere it grow
 cold.

Not all the waters of that mighty sea
Could wash my hands of sin if I should
 now

Falter upon my path. But look to it, you,

BOOK IV.

19

Whose word was doom last night to this
dead man;

Look to it, I say, look to it! Brave men
might shrink

From this great voyage; but the heart of him
Who dares turn backward now must be so
hardy

That God might make a thousand millstones
of it

To hang about the necks of those that hurt
Some little child, and cast them in the sea.
Yet if ye will be found so more than bold,
Speak now, and I will hear you; God will
judge.

But ye shall take four ships of these my five,
Tear out the lions from their painted shields,
And speed you homeward. Leave me but
one ship,

My *Golden Hynde*, and five good friends, nay
one,

To watch when I must sleep, and I will
prove

This judgment just against the winds of the
world.

Now ye that will return, speak, let me know
you,

Or be for ever silent; for I swear
Over this butchered body, if any swerve
Hereafter from the straight and perilous way,
He shall not die alone. What? Will none
speak?

My comrades and my friends! Yet ye must
learn,

Mark me, my friends, I'd have you all to
know

That ye are kings. I'll have no jealousies
Aboard my fleet. I'll have the gentleman
To pull and haul wi' the seaman. I'll not
have

That canker of the Spaniards in my fleet.

Ye that were captains, I cashier you all.
I'll have no captains; I'll have nought but
 seamen,
Obedient to my will, because I serve
England. What, will ye murmur? Now,
 beware,
Lest I should bid you homeward all alone,
You whose white hands are found too delicate
For aught but dallying with your jewelled
 swords!
And thou, too, master Fletcher, my ship's
 chaplain,
Mark me, I'll have no priest-craft. I have
 heard
Overmuch talk of judgment from thy lips,
God's judgment here, God's judgment there,
 upon us!
Whene'er the winds are contrary, thou takest
Their powers upon thee for thy moment's end.
Thou art God's minister, not God's oracle:

Chain up thy tongue a little, or, by His
wounds,

If thou canst read this wide world like a
book,

Thou hast so little to fear, I'll set thee adrift
On God's great sea to find thine own way
home.

Why, 'tis these very tyrannies o' the soul
We strike at when we strike at Spain for
England;

And shall we here, in this great wilderness,
Ungrappled and unchallenged, out of sight,
Alone, without one struggle, sink that flag
Which, when the cannon thundered, could
but stream

Triumphant over all the storms of death.

Nay, master Wynter and my gallant captains,
I see ye are tamed. Take up your ranks
again

In humbleness, remembering ye are kings,

Kings for the sake and by the will of
England,
Therefore her servants till your lives' last end.
Comrades, mistake not this, our little fleet
Is freighted with the golden heart of Eng-
land,
And, if we fail, that golden heart will break.
The world's wide eyes are on us, and our
souls
Are woven together into one great flag
Of England. Shall we strike it? Shall it
be rent
Asunder with small discord, party strife,
Ephemeral conflict of contemptible tongues,
Or shall it be blazoned, blazoned evermore
On the most heaven-wide page of history?
This is that hour, I know it in my soul,
When we must choose for England. Ye are
kings,
And sons of Vikings, exiled from your throne.

Have ye forgotten? Nay, your blood remembers!

There is your kingdom, Vikings, that great ocean

Whose tang is in your nostrils. Ye must choose

Whether to re-assume it now for England,
To claim its thunders for her panoply,
To lay its lightnings in her sovereign hands,
Win her the great commandment of the sea
And let its glory roll with her dominion
Round the wide world for ever, sweeping back
All evil deeds and dreams, or whether to
yield

For evermore that kingdom. Ye must learn
Here in this golden dawn our great emprise
Is greater than we knew. Eye hath not seen,
Ear hath not heard what came across the
dark

Last night, as there anointed with that blood

I knelt and saw the wonder that should be.
I saw new heavens of freedom, a new earth
Released from all old tyrannies. I saw
The brotherhood of man, for which we rode,
Most ignorant of the splendour of our spears,
Against the crimson dynasties of Spain.
Mother of freedom, home and hope and
love,
Our little island, far, how far away,
I saw thee shatter the whole world of hate,
I saw the sunrise on thy helmet flame
With new-born hope for all the world in thee!
Come now, to sea, to sea!"

And ere they knew
What power impelled them, with one mighty
cry
They lifted up their hearts to the new dawn
And hastened down the shores and launched
the boats,

And in the fierce white out-draught of the
waves

Thrust with their brandished oars and the
boats leapt

Out, and they settled at the groaning thwarts,
And the white water boiled before their
blades,

As, with Drake's iron hand upon the helm,
His own boat led the way; and ere they
knew

What power as of a wind bore them along,
Anchor was up, their hands were on the
sheets,

The sails were broken out and that small
squadron

Was flying like a sea-bird to the South.

Now to the strait Magellanus they came,
And entered in with ringing shouts of joy.
Nor did they think there was a fairer strait

In all the world than this which lay so calm
Between great silent mountains crowned with
snow,

Unutterably lonely. Marvellous

The pomp of dawn and sunset on those
heights,

And like a strange new sacrilege the advance
Of prows that ploughed that time-forgotten
tide.

But soon rude flaws, cross currents, tortuous
channels

Bewildered them, and many a league they
drove

As down some vaster Acheron, while the
coasts

With wailing voices cursed them all night
long,

And once again the hideous fires leapt red
By many a grim wrenched crag and gaunt
ravine.

So for a hundred leagues of whirling spume
They groped, till suddenly, far away, they
saw

Full of the sunset, like a cup of gold,
The purple Westward portals of the strait.
Onward o'er roughening waves they plunged
and reached

Capo Desiderato, where they saw

What seemed stupendous in that lonely
place,—

Gaunt, black, and sharp as death against
the sky

The Cross, the great black Cross on Cape
Desire,

Which dead Magellan raised upon the height
To guide, or so he thought, his wandering
ships,

Not knowing they had left him to his doom,
Not knowing how with tears, with tears of
joy,

Rapture, and terrible triumph, and deep awe,
Another should come voyaging and read
Unutterable glories in that sign;
While his rough seamen raised their mighty
 shout

And, once again, before his wondering eyes,
League upon league of awful burnished gold,
Rolled the unknown immeasurable sea.

Now, in those days, as even Magellan held,
Men thought that Southward of the strait
 there swept

Firm land up to the white Antarticke Pole,
Which now not far they deemed. But when
 Drake passed

From out the strait to take his Northward way
Up the Pacific coast, a great head-wind
Suddenly smote them; and the heaving seas
Bulged all around them into billowy hills,
Dark rolling mountains, whose majestic crests

Like wild white flames far-blown and savagely
flickering

Swept through the clouds; and on their
sullen slopes

Like wind-whipt withered leaves those little
ships,

Now hurtled to the Zenith and now plunged
Down into bottomless gulfs, were suddenly
scattered

And whirled away. Drake, on the *Golden
Hynde*,

One moment saw them near him, soaring up
Above him on the huge o'erhanging billows
As if to crash down on his poop; the next,
A mile of howling sea had swept between
Each of those wind-whipt straws, and they
were gone

Through roaring deserts of embattled death,
Where, like a hundred thousand chariots
charged

With lightnings and with thunders, one great
wave
Leading the unleashed ocean down the
storm
Hurled them away to Southward.

One last glimpse
Drake caught o' the *Marygold*, when some
mighty vortex
Wide as the circle of the wide sea-line
Swept them together again. He saw her
staggering
With mast snapt short and wreckage-tangled
deck
Where men like insects clung. He saw the
waves
Leap over her mangled hulk, like wild white
wolves,
Volleying out of the clouds down dismal
steeps

Of green-black water. Like a wounded steed
Quivering upon its haunches, up she heaved
Her head to throw them off. Then, in one
mass

Of fury crashed the great deep over her,
Trampling her down, down into the nether-
most pit,

As with a madman's wrath. She rose no
more,

And in the stream of the ocean's hurricane
laughter

The *Golden Hynde* went hurtling to the
South,

With sails rent into ribbons and her mast
Snapt like a twig. Yea, where Magellan
thought

Firm land had been, the little *Golden Hynde*
Whirled like an autumn leaf through league
on league

Of bursting seas, chaos on crashing chaos,

A rolling wilderness of charging Alps
That shook the world with their tremendous
war;
Grim beetling cliffs that grappled with
clamorous gulfs,
Valleys that yawned to swallow the wide
heaven;
Immense white-flowering fluctuant precipices,
And hills that swooped down at the throat
of hell;
From Pole to Pole, one blanching bursting
storm
Of world-wide oceans, where the huge Pacific
Roared greetings to the Atlantic and both
swept
In broad white cataracts, league on struggling
league,
Pursuing and pursued, immeasurable,
With Titan hands grasping the rent black
sky

East, West, North, South. Then, then was
battle indeed

Of midget men upon that wisp of grass
The *Golden Hynde*, who, as her masts crashed,
hung

Clearing the tiny wreckage from small decks
With ant-like weapons. Not their captain's
voice

Availed them now amidst the deafening
thunder

Of seas that felt the heavy hand of God,
Only they saw across the blinding spume
In steely flashes, grand and grim, a face,
Like the last glimmer of faith among mankind,
Calm in this warring universe, where Drake
Stood, lashed to his post, beside the helm.

Black seas

Buffetted him. Half-stunned he dashed away
The sharp brine from his eagle eyes and
turned

To watch some mountain-range come rushing
down

As if to o'erwhelm them utterly. Once,
indeed,

Welkin and sea were one black wave, white-
fanged,

White-crested, and up-heaped so mightily
That, though it coursed more swiftly than a
herd

Of Titan steeds upon some terrible plain
Nigh the huge City of Ombos, yet it seemed
Most strangely slow, with all those crumbling
crests,

Each like a cataract on a mountain-side,
And moved with the steady majesty of doom
High over him. One moment's flash of fear,
And yet not fear, but rather life's regret,
Felt Drake, then laughed a low deep laugh
of joy

Such as men taste in battle; yea, 'twas good

To grapple thus with death; one low deep
laugh,

One mutter as of a lion about to spring,
Then burst that thunder o'er him. Height
o'er height

The heavens rolled down, and waves were all
the world.

Meanwhile, in England, dreaming of her
sailor,

Far off, his heart's bride waited, of a proud
And stubborn house the bright and gracious
flower.

Whom oft her father urged with scanty grace
That Drake was dead and she had best
forget

The fellow, he grunted. For her father's
heart

Was fettered with small memories, mocked
by all

The greater world's traditions and the trace
Of earth's low pedigree among the suns.
Ringed with the terrible twilight of the Gods,
Ringed with the blood-red dusk of dying
 nations,
His faith was in his grandam's mighty skirt,
And, in that awful consciousness of power,
Had it not been that even in this he feared
To sully her silken flounce or farthingale
Wi' the white dust on his hands, he would
 have chalked
To his own shame, thinking it shame, the
 word
Nearest to God in its divine embrace
Of agonies and glories, the dread word
Demos across that door in Nazareth
Whence came the prentice carpenter whose
 voice
Hath shaken kingdoms down, whose menial
 gibbet

Rises triumphant o'er the wreck of Empires
And stretches out its arms amongst the
stars.

But she, his daughter, only let her heart
Loveably forge a charter for her love,
Cheat her false creed with faithful faery
dreams

That wrapt her love in mystery; thought,
perchance,

He came of some unhappy noble race
Ruined in battle for some lost high cause.
And, in the general mixture of men's blood,
Her dream was truer than his whose blood-
less pride

Urged her to wed the chinless moon-struck
fool

Sprung from five hundred years of idiocy
Who now besought her hand; would force
her bear

Some heir to a calf's tongue and a coronet,

Whose cherished taints of blood will please
his friends

With "Yea, Sir William's first-born hath
the freak,

The family freak, being embryonic. Yea,
And with a fine half-wittedness, forsooth.
Praise God, our children's children yet shall
see

The lord o' the manor muttering to himself
At midnight by the gryphon-guarded gates,
Or gnawing his nails in desolate corridors,
Or pacing moonlit halls, dagger in hand,
Waiting to stab his father's pitiless ghost."
So she—the girl—sweet Bess of Sydenham,
Most innocently proud, was prouder yet
Than thus to let her heart stoop to the
lure

Of lordling lovers, though her unstained soul
Slumbered amidst those dreams as in old
tales

The princess in the enchanted forest sleeps
Till the prince wakes her with a kiss and
draws

The far-flung hues o' the gleaming magic
web

Into one heart of flame. And now, for
Drake,

She slept like Brynhild in a ring of fire
Which he must pass to win her. For the
wrath

Of Spain now flamed, awaiting his return,
All round the seas of home; and even the
Queen

Elizabeth blenched, as that tremendous Power
Menaced the heart of England, blenched and
vowed

Drake's head to Spain's ambassadors, though
still

By subtlety she hoped to find some way
Later to save or warn him ere he came.

Perchance too, nay, most like, he will be
slain

Or even now lies dead, out in the West,
She thought, and then the promise works
no harm.

But, day by day, there came as on the
wings

Of startled winds from o'er the Spanish
Main,

Strange echoes as of sacked and clamouring
ports

And battered gates of fabulous golden cities,

A murmur out of the sunsets of Peru,

A sea-bird's wail from Lima. While no less

The wrathful menace gathered up its might

All round our little isle; till now the King

Philip of Spain half secretly decreed

The building of huge docks from which to
launch

A Fleet Invincible that should sweep the seas

Of all the world, throttle with one broad grasp
All Protestant rebellion, having stablished
His red feet in the Netherlands, thence to hurl
His whole World-Empire at this little isle,
England, our mother, home and hope and
 love,
And bend her neck beneath his yoke. For
 now
No half surrender sought he. At his back,
Robed with the scarlet of a thousand martyrs,
Admonishing him, stood Rome, and, in her
 hand,
Grasping the Cross of Christ by its great hilt,
She pointed it, like a dagger, tow'rds the
 throat
Of England.

One long year, two years had passed
Since Drake set sail from gray old Plymouth
 Sound;

And in those woods of faery wonder still
Slumbered his love in steadfast faith. But

now

With louder lungs her father urged—"He is
dead :

Forget him. There is one that loves you,
seeks

Your hand in marriage, and he is a goodly
match

E'en for my daughter. You shall wed him,
Bess!"

But when the new-found lover came to woo,
Glancing in summer silks and radiant hose,
Whipt doublet and enormous pointed shoon,
She played him like a fish and sent him
home

Spluttering with dismay, a stickleback
Discoloured, a male minnow of dimpled
streams

With all his rainbows paling in the prime,

To hide amongst his lilies, while once more
She took her casement seat that overlooked
The sea and read in Master Spenser's book,
Which Francis gave "To my dear lady and
queen

Bess," that most rare processional of love—
"*Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my
song!*"

Yet did her father urge her day by day,
And day by day her mother dinned her ears
With petty saws, as—"When *I* was a girl,"
And "I remember what *my* father said,"
And "Love, oh feather-fancies plucked from
geese

You call your poets!" Yet she hardly meant
To slight true love, save in her daughter's
heart;

For the old folk ever find it hard to see
The passion of their children. When it
wakes,

The child becomes a stranger. That small
bird

Which was its heart hath left the fostering
nest

And flown they know not whither. So with
Bess;

But since her soul still slumbered, and the
moons

Rolled on and blurred her soul's particular
love

With the vague unknown impulse of her
youth,

Her brave resistance often melted now

In tears, and her will weakened day by day;

Till on a dreadful summer morn there came,

Borne by a wintry flaw, home to the Thames,

A bruised and battered ship, all that was
left,

So said her crew, of Drake's ill-fated fleet.

John Wynter, her commander, told the tale

Of how the *Golden Hynde* and *Marygold*
Had by the wind Euroclydon been driven
Sheer o'er the howling edges of the world;
Of how himself by God's good providence
Was hurled into the strait *Magellanus*;
Of how on the horrible frontiers of the Void
He had watched in vain, lit red with
beacon-fires
The desperate coasts o' the black abyss,
whence none
Ever returned, though many a week he
watched
Beneath the Cross; and only saw God's
wrath
Burn through the heavens and devastate the
mountains,
And hurl unheard of oceans roaring down
After the lost ships in one cataract
Of thunder and splendour and fury and roll-
ing doom.

Then, with a bitter triumph in his face,
As if this were the natural end of all
Such vile plebeians, as if he had foreseen it,
As if himself had breathed a tactful hint
Into the aristocratic ears of God,
Her father broke the last frail barriers down,
Broke the poor listless will o' the lonely girl,
Who careless now of aught but misery
Promised to wed their lordling. Mighty
speed

They made to press that loveless marriage on;
And ere the May had mellowed into June
Her marriage eve had come. Her cold
hands held

Drake's gift. She scarce could see her
name, writ broad

By that strong hand as it was, *To my queen
Bess.*

She looked out through her casement o'er
the sea,

Listening its old enchanted moan, which
seemed

Striving to speak, she knew not what. Its
breath

Fluttered the roses round the gray old walls,
And shook the starry jasmine. A great moon
Hung like a red lamp in the sycamore.

A corn-crake in the hay-fields far away
Chirped like a cricket, and the night-jar
churred

His passionate love-song. Soft-winged moths
besieged

Her lantern. Under many a star-stabbed elm
The nightingale began his golden song,
Whose warm thick notes are each a drop
of blood

From that small throbbing breast against
the thorn

Pressed close to turn the white rose into
red;

Even as her lawn-clad may-white bosom
pressed

Quivering against the bars, while her dark
hair

Streamed round her shoulders and her small
bare feet

Gleamed in the dusk. Then spake she to
her maid—

“I cannot sleep, I cannot sleep to-night.

Bring thy lute hither and sing. Say, dost
thou think

The dead can watch us from their distant
world?

Can our dead friends be near us when we
weep?

I wish 'twere so! For then my love would
come,

No matter then how far, my love would
come,

And press a light kiss on these aching eyes

And say, 'Grieve not, dear heart, for I
know all,

And I forgive thee.' Ah, then, I should
sleep,

Sleep, sleep and dream once more. Last
night, last night,

I know not if it were that song of thine
Which tells of some poor lover, crazed with
pain,

Who wanders to the grave-side of his love
And knocks at that cold door until his love
Opens it, and they two for some brief while
Forget their doom in one another's arms
Once more; for, oh, last night, I had a
dream;

My love came to me through the Gates of
Death,

I know not how he came. I only know
His arms were round me, and, from far
away,

From far beyond the stars it seemed, his
voice

Breathed, in unutterable grief, farewells
Of shuddering sweetness, clasped in one
small word

Sweetheart, a joy untold, an untold pain,
Far, far away, although his breath beat warm
Against my cheek and dried mine own poor
tears.

Ah, sing that song once more; for I have
heard

There are some songs, and this was one I
am sure,

Like the grey poppies of those dreaming fields
Where poor dead lovers drift, and in their
pain

We lose our own. Give me that popped
sleep,

And if—in dreams—I touch my true love's
lips,

Trust me I will not ask ever to wake
Again." Whereat the maiden touched her
lute
And sang, low-toned, with pity in her eyes.

Then Bess bowed down her lovely head:
her breast
Heaved with short sobs and, sickening at
the heart,
She grasped the casement, moaning, "Love,
Love, Love,
Come quickly, come, before it is too late,
Come quickly, oh come quickly."

Then her maid
Slipped a soft arm around her and gently
drew
The supple quivering body, shaken with
sobs,
And all that firm young sweetness, to her
breast,

And led her to her couch, and all night
long

She watched beside her, till the marriage
morn

Blushed in the heartless East. Then swiftly
flew

The pitiless moments, till—as in a dream—
And borne along by dreams, or like a lily
Cut from its anchorage in the stream to
glide

Down the smooth bosom of an unknown
world

Through fields of unknown blossom, so
moved Bess

Amongst her maids, as the procession passed
Forth to the little church upon the cliffs,
And, as in those days was the bridal mode,
Her lustrous hair in billowing beauty streamed
Dishevelled o'er her shoulders, while the
sun

Caressed her bent and glossy head, and
shone

Over the deep blue, white-flaked, wrinkled
sea,

On full-blown rosy-petalled sails that flashed
Like flying blossoms fallen from her crown.

BOOK V.

I.

*With the fruit of Aladdin's garden clustering thick in
her hold,
With rubies awash in her scuppers and her bilge ablaze
with gold,
A world in arms behind her to sever her heart from
home,
The Golden Hynde drove onward over the glittering
foam.*

II.

*If we go as we came, by the Southward, we meet wi'
the fleets of Spain!
'Tis a thousand to one against us: we'll turn to the
West again!
We have captured a China pilot, his charts and his
golden keys:
We'll sail to the golden Gateway, over the golden seas.*

OVER the immeasurable molten gold
Wrapped in a golden haze, onward they drew;
And now they saw the tiny purple quay

Grow larger and darker and brighten into
brown

Across the swelling sparkle of the waves.
Brown on the quay, a train of tethered mules
Munched at the nose-bags, while a Spaniard
drowsed

On guard beside what seemed at first a heap
Of fish, then slowly turned to silver bars
Up-piled and glistening in the enchanted sun.
Nor did that sentry wake as, like a dream,
The *Golden Hynde* divided the soft sleep
Of warm green lapping water, sidled up,
Sank sail, and moored beside the quay. But

Drake,

Lightly leaping ashore and stealing nigh,
Picked up the Spaniard's long gay-ribboned
gun

Close to his ear. At once, without a sound,
The watchman opened his dark eyes and
stared

As at strange men who suddenly had come,
Borne by some magic carpet, from the stars;
Then, with a courtly bow, his right hand
thrust

Within the lace embroideries of his breast,
Politely Drake, with pained apologies
For this disturbance of a cavalier
Napping on guard, straightway resolved to
make

Complete amends, by now relieving him
Of these—which doubtless troubled his
repose—

These anxious bars of silver. With that word
Two seamen leaped ashore and, gathering up
The bars in a stout old patch of tawny sail,
Slung them aboard. No sooner this was
done

Than out o' the valley, like a foolish jest
Out of the mouth of some great John-a-
dreams,

In soft procession of buffoonery
A woolly train of llamas proudly came
Stepping by two and two along the quay,
Laden with pack on pack of silver bars
And driven by a Spaniard. His amaze
The seamen greeted with profuser thanks
For his most punctual thought and opportune
Courtesy. None the less they must avouch
It pained them much to see a cavalier
Turned carrier; and, at once, they must
insist
On easing him of that too sordid care.

.
Then out from Tarapaca once again
They sailed, their hold a glimmering mine of
wealth,
Towards Arica and Lima, where they deemed
The prize of prizes waited unaware.
For every year a gorgeous galleon sailed
With all the harvest of Potosi's mines

And precious stones from dead kings' diadems,
Aztecs' and Incas' gem-encrusted crowns,
Pearls from the glimmering Temples of the
Moon,

Rich opals with their milky rainbow-clouds,
White diamonds from the Temples of the
Sun,

Carbuncles flaming scarlet, amethysts,
Rubies, and sapphires; these to Spain she
brought

To glut her priestly coffers. Now not far
Ahead they deemed she lay upon that coast,
Crammed with the lustrous Indies, wrung
with threat

And torture from the naked Indian slaves.
To him that spied her top-sails first a prize
Drake offered of the wondrous chain he
wore;

And every seaman, every ship-boy, watched
Not only for the prize, but for their friends,

If haply these had weathered through the
storm.

Nor did they know their friends had home-
ward turned,

Bearing to England and to England's Queen,
And his heart's queen, the tale that Drake
was dead.

Northward they cruised along a warm wild ,
coast

That like a most luxurious goddess drowsed
Supine to heaven, her arms behind her head,
One knee up-thrust to make a mountain-
peak,

Her rosy breasts up-heaving their soft snow
In distant Andes, and her naked side
With one rich curve for half a hundred
leagues

Bathed by the creaming foam; her heavy
hair

Fraught with the perfume of a thousand
forests

Tossed round about her beauty; and her
mouth

A scarlet mystery of distant flower

Up-turned to take the kisses of the sun.

But like a troop of boys let loose from school

The adventurers went by, startling the still-
ness

Of that voluptuous dream-encumbered shore

With echoing shouts of laughter and alien
song.

But as they came to Arica, from afar

They heard the clash of bells upon the
breeze,

And knew that Rumour with her thousand
wings

Had rushed before them. Horsemen in the
night

Had galloped through the white coast-villages
And spread the dreadful cry "El Draque"
abroad ;

And when the gay adventurers drew nigh
They found the quays deserted, and the
ships

All flown, except one little fishing-boat
Wherein an old man like a tortoise moved
A wrinkled head above the rusty net
His crawling hands repaired. He seemed to
dwell

Outside the world of war and peace, outside
Everything save his daily task, and cared
No whit who else might win or lose ; for all
The pilot asked of him without demur
He answered, scarcely looking from his work.
A galleon laden with eight hundred bars
Of silver, not three hours ago had flown
Northward, he muttered. Ere the words
were out,

The will of Drake thrilled through the *Golden
Hynde*

Like one sharp trumpet-call, and ere they
knew

What power impelled them, crowding on all
sail

Northward they surged, and roaring down
the wind

At Chiuli, port of Arequipa, saw

The chase at anchor. Wondering they came

With all the gunners waiting at their guns

Bare-armed and silent—nearer, nearer yet,—

Close to the enemy. But no sight or sound

Of living creature stirred upon her decks.

Only a great grey cat lay in the sun

Upon a warm smooth cannon-butt. A chill

Ran through the veins of even the boldest
there

At that too peaceful silence. Cautiously

Drake neared her in his pinnace: cautiously,

Cutlass in hand, up that mysterious hull
He clomb, and wondered, as he climbed, to
breathe

The friendly smell o' the pitch and hear the
waves

With their incessant old familiar sound
Crackling and slapping against her windward
flank.

A ship of dreams was that; for when they
reached

The silent deck, they saw no crouching
forms,

They heard no sound of life. Only the hot
Creak of the cordage whispered in the sun.

The cat stood up and yawned, and slunk
away

Slowly, with furtive glances. The great hold
Was empty, and the rich cabin stripped and
bare.

Suddenly one of the seamen with a cry

Pointed where, close inshore, a little boat
Stole towards the town; and, with a louder
cry,

Drake bade his men aboard the *Golden
Hynde*.

Scarce had they pulled two hundred yards
away

When, with a roar that seemed to buffet the
heavens

And rip the heart of the sea out, one red
flame

Blackened with fragments, the great galleon
burst

Asunder! All the startled waves were strewn
With wreckage; and Drake laughed—"My
lads, we have diced

With death to-day, and won! My merry lads,
It seems that Spain is bolting with the
stakes!

Now, if I have to stretch the skies for sails

And summon the blasts of God up from the
South

To fill my canvas, I will overhaul
Those dusky devils with the treasure-ship
That holds our hard-earned booty. Pull
hard all,

Hard for the *Golden Hynde*."

.

And so they came
At dead of night on Callao de Lima!
They saw the harbour lights across the waves
Glittering, and the shadowy hulks of ships
Gathered together like a flock of sheep
Within the port. With shouts and clink of
chains

A shadowy ship was entering from the
North,

And like the shadow of that shadow slipped
The *Golden Hynde* beside her thro' the
gloom;

And side by side they anchored in the port
Amidst the shipping! Over the dark tide
A small boat from the customs-house drew
near.

A sleepy, yawning, gold-laced officer
Boarded the *Golden Hynde*, and with a cry,
Stumbling against a cannon-butt, he saw
The bare-armed British seamen in the gloom
All waiting by their guns. Wildly he plunged
Over the side and urged his boat away,
Crying, "El Draque! El Draque!" At that
dread word

The darkness filled with clamour, and the
ships,

Cutting their cables, drifted here and there
In mad attempts to seek the open sea.
Wild lights burnt hither and thither, and all
the port,

One furnace of confusion, heaved and seethed
In terror; for each shadow of the night,

Nay, the great night itself, was all *El
Draque*.

The Dragon's wings were spread from quay
to quay,

The very lights that burnt from mast to mast
And flared across the tide kindled his breath
To fire; while here and there a British
pinnace

Slipped softly thro' the roaring gloom and
glare,

Ransacking ship by ship; for each one
thought

A fleet had come upon them. Each gave up
The struggle as each was boarded; while,
elsewhere,

Cannon to cannon, friends bombarded friends.

Yet not one ounce of treasure in Callao
They found; for, fourteen days before they
came,

That greatest treasure-ship of Spain, with all
The gorgeous harvest of that year, had sailed
For Panama : her ballast—silver bars ;
Her cargo—rubies, emeralds, and gold.

Out through the clamour and the darkness,
out,

Out to the harbour mouth, the *Golden Hynde*,
Steered by the iron soul of Drake, returned :
And where the way was blocked, her cannon
clove

A crimson highway to the midnight sea.
Then Northward, Northward, o'er the jewelled
main,

Under the white moon like a storm they drove
In quest of the *Cacafuego*. Fourteen days
Her start was ; and at dawn the fair wind
sank,

And chafing lay the *Golden Hynde*, becalmed ;
While, on the hills, the Viceroy of Peru

Marched down from Lima with two thousand
men,

And sent out four huge ships of war to sink
Or capture the fierce Dragon. Loud laughed
Drake

To see them creeping nigh, urged with great
oars,

Then suddenly pause; for none would be
the first

To close with him. And, ere they had
steeled their hearts

To battle, a fair breeze broke out anew,
And Northward sped the little *Golden Hynde*
In quest of the lordliest treasure-ship of
Spain.

.

Behind her lay a world in arms; for now
Wrath and confusion clamoured for revenge
From sea to sea. Spain claimed the pirate's
head

From England, and awaited his return
With all her tortures. And where'er he
passed

He sowed the dragon's teeth, and every-
where

Cadmean broods of arméd men arose
And followed, followed on his fiery trail.
Men toiled at Lima to fit out a fleet
Grim enough to destroy him. All night long
The flare went up from cities on the coast
Where men like naked devils toiled to cast
Cannon that might have overwhelmed the
powers

Of Michael when he drave that hideous rout
Through livid chaos to the black abyss.
Small hope indeed there seemed of safe
return ;

But Northward sped the little *Golden Hynde*,
The world-watched midget ship of eighteen
guns,

Undaunted; and upon the second dawn
Sighted a galleon, not indeed the chase,
Yet worth a pause; for out of her they
took—

Embossed with emeralds large as pigeon's
eggs—

A golden crucifix, with eighty pounds
In weight of gold. The rest they left behind;
And onward, onward, to the North they
flew—

A score of golden miles, a score of green,
An hundred miles, eight hundred miles of
foam,

Rainbows and fire, ransacking as they went
Ship after ship for news o' the chase and
gold;

Learning from every capture that they drew
Nearer and nearer. At Truxillo, dim
And dreaming city, a-drowse with purple
flowers,

She had paused, ay, paused to take a freight
of gold!

At Paita—she had passed two days in
front,

Only two days, two days ahead; nay, one!

At Quito, close inshore, a youthful page,
Bright-eyed, ran up the rigging and cried,
“A sail!

A sail! The *Cacafuego*! And the chain
Is mine!” And by the strange cut of her
sails,

Whereof they had been told in Callao,
They knew her!

Heavily laden with her gems,
Lazily drifting with her golden fruitage,
Over the magic seas they saw her hull
Loom as they onward drew; but Drake, for
fear
The prey might take alarm and run ashore,

Trailed wine-skins, filled with water, o'er the
side

To hold his ship back, till the darkness fell,
And with the night the off-shore wind arose.
At last the sun sank down, the rosy light
Faded from Andes' peaked and bosomed
snow:

The night-wind rose: the wine-skins were
up-hauled;

And, like a hound unleashed, the *Golden
Hynde*

Leapt forward thro' the gloom.

A cable's length
Divided them. The *Cacafuego* heard
A rough voice in the darkness bidding her
Heave to! She held her course. Drake gave
the word.

A broadside shattered the night, and over
her side

Her main-yard clattered like a broken wing!

On to her decks the British sea-dogs swarmed,
Cutlass in hand: that fight was at an end.

The ship was cleared, a prize crew placed
on board,

Then both ships turned their heads to the
open sea.

At dawn, being out of sight of land, they
'gan

Examine the great prize. None ever knew
Save Drake and Gloriana what wild wealth
They had captured there. Thus much at
least was known:

An hundredweight of gold, and twenty tons
Of silver bullion; thirteen chests of coins;
Nuggets of gold unnumbered; countless pearls,
Diamonds, and emeralds; but the worth of
these

Was past all reckoning. In the crimson
dawn,

Ringed with the lonely pomp of sea and sky,
The naked-footed seamen bathed knee-deep
In gold and gathered up Aladdin's fruit—
All-coloured gems—and tossed them in the
sun.

The hold like one great elfin orchard gleamed
With dusky globes and tawny glories piled,
Hesperian apples, heap on mellow heap,
Rich with the hues of sunset, rich and ripe
And ready for the enchanted cider-press;
An Emperor's ransom in each burning orb;
A kingdom's purchase in each clustered
bough;
The freedom of all slaves in every chain.

BOOK VI.

Now like the soul of Ophir on the sea
Glittered the *Golden Hynde*, and all her heart
Turned home to England. As a child that
finds

A ruby ring upon the highway, straight
Homeward desires to run with it, so she
Yearned for her home and country. Yet the
world

Was all in arms behind her. Fleet on fleet
Awaited her return. Along the coast
The very churches melted down their chimes
And cast them into cannon. To the South
A thousand cannon watched Magellan's straits,
And fleets were scouring all the sea like
hounds,

With orders that where'er they came on
Drake,
Although he were the Dragon of their dreams,
They should out-blast his thunders and
convey,
Dead or alive, his body back to Spain.

And Drake laughed out and said, "My
trusty lads
Of Devon, you have made the wide world
ring
With England's name; you have swept one
half the seas
From sky to sky; and in our oaken hold
You have packed the gorgeous Indies. We
shall sail
But slowly with such wealth. If we return,
We are one against ten thousand! We will
seek
The fabled Northern passage, take our gold

Safe home ; then out to sea again and try
Our guns against their guns."

.
And as they sailed
Northward, they swooped on warm blue
Guatulco

For food and water. Nigh the dreaming port
The grand alcaldes in high conclave sat,
Blazing with gold and scarlet, as they tried
A batch of negro slaves upon the charge
Of idleness in Spanish mines ; dumb slaves,
With bare scarred backs and labour-broken
knees,

And sorrowful eyes like those of wearied
kine
Spent from the ploughing. Even as the
judge

Rose to condemn them to the knotted lash
The British boat's crew, quiet and compact,
Entered the court. The grim judicial glare

Grew wider with amazement, and the judge
Staggered against his gilded throne.

“I thank
Almighty God,” cried Drake, “who hath
given me this

—That I who once, in ignorance, procured
Slaves for the golden bawdy-house of Spain,
May now, in England’s name, help to requite
That wrong. For now I say in England’s
name,

Where’er her standard flies, the slave shall
stand

Upright, the shackles fall from off his limbs.
Unyoke the prisoners: tell them they are
men

Once more, not beasts of burden. Set them
free;

But take these gold and scarlet popinjays
Aboard my *Golden Hynde*; and let them
write

81

This being done,

The *Golden Hynde* revictualled and the casks
Replenished with fresh water, Drake set free
The judges and swept Northward once again ;
And, off the coast of Nicaragua, found
A sudden treasure better than all gold ;
For on the track of the China trade they
caught

A ship whereon two China pilots sailed,
And in their cabin lay the secret charts,
Red hieroglyphs of Empire, unknown charts
Of silken sea-roads down the golden West
Where all roads meet and East and West
are one.

And, with that mystery stirring in their
hearts

Like a strange cry from home, Northward
they swept
And Northward, till the soft luxurious coasts
Hardened, the winds grew bleak, the great
green waves
Loomed high like mountains round them,
and the spray
Froze on their spars and yards. Fresh from
the warmth
Of tropic seas the men could hardly brook
That cold; and when the floating hills of ice
Like huge green shadows crowned with
ghostly snow
Went past them with strange whispers in
the gloom,
Or took mysterious colours in the dawn,
Their hearts misgave them; and they found
no way;
But all was iron shore and icy sea.
And one by one the crew fell sick to death

In that fierce winter, and the land still ran
Westward and showed no passage. Tossed
 with storms,
Onward they plunged, or furrowed gentler
 tides
Of ice-lit emerald that made the prow
A faery beak of some enchanted ship
Flinging wild rainbows round her as she
 drove
Thro' seas unsailed by mortal mariners,
Past isles unhailed of any human voice,
Where sound and silence mingled in one
 song
Of utter solitude. Ever as they went
The flag of England blazoned the broad
 breeze,
Northward, where never ship had sailed before,
Northward, till lost in helpless wonderment,
Dazed as a soul awakening from the dream
Of death to some wild dawn in Paradise

(Yet burnt with cold as they whose very
tears

Freeze on their faces where Cocytus wails)
All world-worn, bruised, wing-broken, wracked,
and wrenched,

Blackened with lightning, scarred as with
evil deeds,

But all embalmed in beauty by that sun
Which never sets, bosomed in peace at last
The *Golden Hynde* rocked on a glittering calm.
Seas that no ship had ever sailed, from sky
To glistening sky, swept round them. Glory
and gleam,

Glamour and lucid rapture and diamond air
Embraced her broken spars, begrimed with
gold

Her gloomy hull, rocking upon a sphere
New made, it seemed, mysterious with the
first

Mystery of the world, where holy sky

And sacred sea shone like the primal Light
Of God, a-stir with whispering sea-bird's
wings

And glorious with clouds. Only, all day,
All night, the rhythmic utterance of His will
In the deep sigh of seas, that washed His
throne,

Rose and relapsed across Eternity,
Timed to the pulse of æons. All their world
Seemed strange as unto us the great new
heavens

And glittering shores, if on some aery bark
To Saturn's coasts we came and traced no
more

The tiny gleam of our familiar earth
Far off, but heard tremendous oceans roll
Round unimagined continents, and saw
Terrible mountains unto which our Alps
Were less than mole-hills, and such gaunt
ravines

Cleaving them and such cataracts roaring
down

As burst the gates of our earth-moulded
senses,

Pour the eternal glory on our souls,
And, while ten thousand chariots bring the
dawn,

Hurl us poor midgets trembling to our knees.
Glory and glamour and rapture of lucid air,
Ice cold, with subtle colours of the sky
Embraced her broken spars, belted her hulk
With brilliance, while she dipped her jacinth
beak

In waves of mounded splendour, and some-
times

A great ice-mountain flashed and floated by
Throned on the waters, pinnacled and
crowned

With all the smouldering jewels in the
world;

Or in the darkness, glimmering berg on berg,
All emerald to the moon, went by like ghosts
Whispering to the South.

There, as they lay,
Waiting a wind to fill the stiffened sails,
Their hearts remembered that in England
now

The Spring was nigh, and in that lonely sea
The skilled musicians filled their eyes with
home.

SONG.

I.

*It is the Spring-tide now !
Under the hawthorn-bough
The milkmaid goes :
Her eyes are violets blue
Washed with the morning dew,
Her mouth a rose.
It is the Spring-tide now.*

II.

*The lanes are growing sweet,
The lambkins frisk and bleat
In all the meadows :
The glossy dappled kine
Blink in the warm sunshine,
Cooling their shadows.
It is the Spring-tide now.*

III.

*Soon hand in sunburnt hand
Thro' God's green fairyland,
England, our home,
Whispering as they stray
Adown the primrose way,
Lovers will roam.
It is the Spring-tide now.*

And then, with many a chain of linkéd
sweetness,

Harmonious gold, they drew their hearts and
souls
Back, back to England, thoughts of wife
and child,
Mother and sweetheart and the old com-
panions,
The twisted streets of London and the deep
Delight of Devon lanes, all softly voiced
In words or cadences, made them breathe
hard
And gaze across the everlasting sea,
Craving for that small isle so far away.

SONG.

I.

*O, you beautiful land,
Deep-bosomed with beeches and bright
With the flowery largesse of May*

*Sweet from the palm of her hand
Out-flung, till the hedges grew white
As the green-arched billows with spray.*

II.

White from the fall of her feet
The daisies awake in the sun!
Cliff-side and valley and plain
With the breath of the thyme growing sweet
Laugh, for the Spring is begun;
And Love hath turned homeward again.
O, you beautiful land! &c.

III.

Where should the home be of Love,
But there, where the hawthorn-tree blows,
And the milkmaid trips out with her pail,

And the skylark in heaven above
Sings, till the West is a rose
And the East is a nightingale?
O, you beautiful land! &c.

IV.

There where the sycamore trees
Are shading the satin-skinned kine,
And oaks, whose brethren of old
Conquered the strength of the seas,
Grow broad in the sunlight and shine
Crowned with their cressets of gold;
O, you beautiful land! &c.

V.

Deep-bosomed with beeches and bright
With rose-coloured cloudlets above;
Billowing broad and grand

Where the meadows with blossom are white
For the foot-fall, the foot-fall of Love.
O, you beautiful land!

VI.

How should we sing of thy beauty,
England, mother of men,
We that can look in thine eyes
And see there the splendour of duty
Deep as the depth of their ken,
Wide as the ring of thy skies.

VII.

*O, you beautiful land,
Deep-bosomed with beeches and bright
With the flowery largesse of May
Sweet from the palm of her hand
Out-flung, till the hedges grew white
As the green-arched billows with spray.
O, you beautiful land!*

And when a fair wind rose again, there
seemed

No hope of passage by that fabled way
Northward, and suddenly Drake put down
his helm

And, with some wondrous purpose in his
eyes,

Turned Southward once again, until he found
A lonely natural harbour on the coast
Near San Francisco, where the cliffs were
white

Like those of England, and the soft soil
teemed

With gold. There they careened the *Golden
Hynde*—

Her keel being thick with barnacles and
weeds—

And built a fort and dockyard to refit
Their little wandering home, not half so large
As many a coasting barque to-day that scarce

Would cross the Channel, yet she had swept
the seas

Of half the world, and even now prepared
For new adventures greater than them all.
And as the sound of chisel and hammer
broke

The stillness of that shore, shy figures came,
Keen-faced and grave-eyed Indians, from the
woods

To bow before the strange white-faced new-
comers

As gods. Whereat the chaplain much aghast
Persuaded them with signs and broken words
And grunts that even Drake was but a man,
Whom none the less the savages would
crown

With woven flowers and barbarous ritual
King of New Albion—so the seamen called
That land, remembering the white cliffs of
home.

Much they implored, with many a sign and
cry,

Which by the rescued slaves upon the prize
Were part interpreted, that Drake would stay
And rule them; and the vision of the great
Empire of Englishmen arose and flashed
A moment round them, on that lonely shore.
A small and weather-beaten band they stood,
Bronzed seamen by the laughing rescued
slaves,

Ringed with gigantic loneliness and saw
An Empire that should liberate the world;
A Power before the lightning of whose arms
Darkness should die and all oppression cease;
A Federation of the strong and weak,
Whereby the weak were strengthened and
the strong

Made stronger in the increasing good of all;
A gathering up of one another's loads;
A turning of the wasteful rage of war

To accomplish large and fruitful tasks of
peace,

Even as the strength of some great stream
is turned

To grind the corn for bread. E'en thus on
England

That splendour dawned which these in dreams
foresaw

And saw not with their living eyes, but
thou,

England, mayst lift up eyes at last and see,

Who, like that angel of the Apocalypse

Hast set one foot upon thy sea-girt isle,

The other upon the waters, and canst raise

Now, if thou wilt, above the assembled
nations,

The trumpet of deliverance to thy lips.

.

At last their task was done, the *Golden Hynde*

Undocked, her white wings hoisted ; and away

Westward they swiftly glided from that shore
Where, with a wild lament, their Indian
friends,

Knee-deep i' the creaming foam, all stood at
gaze,

Like men that for one moment in their lives
Have seen a mighty drama cross their path
And played upon the stage of vast events
Knowing, henceforward, all their life is
nought.

But Westward sped the little *Golden Hynde*
Across the uncharted ocean, with no guide
But that great homing cry of all their hearts.
Far out of sight of land they steered, straight
out

Across the great Pacific, in those days
When even the compass proved no trusty
guide,

Straight out they struck in that small bark,
straight out

Week after week, without one glimpse of
aught

But heaving seas, across the uncharted waste
Straight to the sunset. Laughingly they
sailed,

With all that gorgeous booty in their holds,
A splendour dragging deep through seas of
doom,

A prey to the first great hurricane that blew
Except their God averted it. And still

Their skilled musicians cheered the way along
To shores beyond the sunset and the sea.

And oft at nights, the yellow fo'c'sle lanthorn
Swung over swarthy singing faces grouped

Within the four small wooden walls that
made

Their home and shut them from the un-
fathomable

Depths of mysterious gloom without that
rolled

All round them; or Tom Moone would
heartily troll
A simple stave that struggled oft with
thoughts
Beyond its reach, yet reached their hearts
no less.

SONG.

I.

*Good luck befall you, mariners all
That sail this world so wide!
Whither we go, not yet we know:
We steer by wind and tide.
Be it right or wrong, I sing this song;
For now it seems to me
Men steer their souls thro' rocks and shoals
As mariners use by sea.*

Chorus: *As mariners use by sea,
My lads,
As mariners use by sea!*

II.

*And now they plough to windward, now
They drive before the gale !
Now are they hurled across the world
With torn and tattered sail ;
Yet, as they will, they steer and still
Defy the world's rude glee :
Till death o'erwhelm them, mast and helm,
They ride and rule the sea.*

Chorus: *They ride and rule the sea,
My lads,
They ride and rule the sea !*

.

Meantime, in England, Bess of Sydenham,
Drake's love and queen, being told that
Drake was dead,
And numbed with grief, obeying her father's
will

That dreadful summer morn in bridal robes
Had passed to wed her father's choice. The
sun
Streamed smiling on her as she went, half-
dazed,
Amidst her smiling maids. Nigh to the sea
The church was, and the mellow marriage
bells
Mixed with its music. Far away, white
sails
Spangled the sapphire, white as flying
blossoms
New-fallen from her crown; but as the glad
And sad procession neared the little church,
From some strange ship-of-war, far out at
sea,
There came a sudden tiny puff of smoke—
And then a dull strange throb, a whistling
hiss,
And scarce a score of yards away a shot

Ploughed up the turf. None knew, none
ever knew

From whence it came, whether a perilous
jest

Of English seamen, or a wanton deed
Of Spaniards, or mere accident; but all
Her maids in flight were scattered. Bess
awoke

As from a dream, crying aloud—" 'Tis he,
'Tis he that sends this message. He is not
dead.

I will not pass the porch. Nay, take me
home,

'Twas he that sent that message."

Nought availed,
Her father's wrath, her mother's tears, her
maids'

Cunning persuasions, nought; home she re-
turned,

And waited for the dead to come to life;

Nor waited long; for ere that month was
out,
Rumour on rumour reached the coasts of
England,
Borne as it seemed on sea-birds' wings, that
Drake
Was on his homeward way.

BOOK VII.

THE imperial wrath of Spain, one world-
wide sea

Of furious pomp and flouted power, now
surged

All round this little isle, with one harsh roar
Deepening for Drake's return—"The *Golden*
Hynde

Ye swore had foundered, Drake ye swore was
drowned,

They are on their homeward way! The head
of Drake!

What answer, what account, what recom-
pense

Now can ye yield our might invincible

Except the head of Drake, whose bloody
deeds

Have reddened the Pacific, who hath sacked
Cities of gold, burnt fleets, and ruined realms,
What answer but his life?"

To which the Queen
Who saw the storm of Europe slowly rising
In awful menace o'er her wave-beat throne,
And midmost of the storm, the ensanguined
robes

Of Rome and murderous hand, grasping the
Cross

By its great hilt, pointing it like a brand
Blood-blackened at the throat of England, saw
Like skeleton castles wrapt in rolling mist
The monstrous engines and designs of war,
The secret fleets and brooding panoplies
Philip prepared, growing from day to day
In dusk armipotent and embattled gloom
Surrounding her, replied: "The life of Drake,

If, on our strict inquiry, in due order
We find that Drake have hurt our friends,
mark well,
If Drake have hurt our friends, the life of
Drake."

.
And while the world awaited him, as men
Might wait an earthquake, quietly one grey
morn,
One grey October morn of mist and rain
When all the window-panes in Plymouth
dripped
With listless drizzle, and only through her
streets
Rumbled the death-cart with its dreary bell
Monotonously plangent (for the plague
Had lately like a vampire sucked the veins
Of Plymouth town), a little weed-clogged ship,
Grey as a ghost, glided into the Sound
And anchored, scarce a soul to see her come,

And not an eye to read the faded scroll
Around her battered prow—the *Golden Hynde*.
Then, thro' the dumb grey misty listless port,
A rumour like the colours of the dawn
Streamed o'er the shining quays, up the wet
streets,

In at the tavern doors, flashed from the panes
And turned them into diamonds, fired the
pools

In every muddy lane with Spanish gold,
Flushed in a thousand faces, Drake is come!
Down every crowding alley the urchins leaped
Tossing their caps, the *Golden Hynde* is come!
Fisherman, citizen, prentice, dame and maid,
Fat justice, floury baker, bloated butcher,
Fishwife, minister and apothecary,
Yea, even the driver of the death-cart, leaving
His ghastly load, using his dreary bell
To merrier purpose, down the seething streets,
Panting, tumbling, jostling, helter-skelter

To the water-side, to the water-side they
rushed,

And some knee-deep beyond it, all one wild
Welcome to Francis Drake!

Wild kerchiefs fluttering, thunderous hurrahs
Rolling from quay to quay, a thousand arms
Outstretched to that grey ghostly little ship
At whose masthead the British flag still flew;
Then, over all, in one tumultuous tide
Of pealing joy, the Plymouth bells out-
clashed

A nation's welcome home to Francis Drake.

The very *Golden Hynde*, no idle dream,
The little ship that swept the Spanish Main,
Carelessly lying there, in Plymouth Sound,
The *Golden Hynde*, the wonder of the world,
A glory wrapt her greyness, and no boat
Dared yet approach, save one, with Drake's
close friends,

Who came to warn him: "England stands
alone

And Drake is made the price of England's
peace.

The Queen, perforce, must temporise with
Spain,

The Invincible! She hath forfeited thy life
To Spain, against her will. Only by this
Rejection of thee as a privateer

She averted instant war; for now the menace
Of Spain draws nigher, looms darker every
hour.

The world is made Spain's footstool. Philip,
the King,

E'en now hath added to her boundless power
Without a blow, the vast domains and wealth
Of Portugal, and deadlier yet, a coast
That crouches over against us. Cadiz holds
A huge Armada, none knows where to strike;
And even this day a flying horseman brought

Rumours that Spain hath landed a great
force

In Ireland. Mary of Scotland only waits
The word to stab us in the side for Rome.
The Queen, weighed down by Burleigh and
the friends

Of peace at any cost, may yet be driven
To make thy life our ransom, which indeed
She hath already sworn, or seemed to swear."

To whom Drake answered, "Gloriana lives;
And in her life mine only fear lies dead,
Mine only fear, for England, not myself.
Willing am I and glad, as I have lived,
To die for England's sake.

Yet, lest the Queen be driven now to restore
This cargo that I bring her—a world's
wealth,

The golden springs of all the power of Spain,
The jewelled hearts of all those cruel realms

BOOK VII.

III

(For I have plucked them out) beyond
the sea;

Lest she be driven to yield them up again
For Rome and Rome's delight, I will
warp out

Behind St Nicholas' Island. The fierce
plague

In Plymouth shall be colour and excuse,
Until my courier return from court
With Gloriana's will. If it be death,
I'll out again to sea, strew its rough floor
With costlier largesses than kings can throw,
And, ere I die, will singe the Spaniard's
beard

And set the fringe of his imperial robe
Blazing along his coasts. Then let him roll
His galleons round the little *Golden Hynde*,
Bring her to bay, if he can, on the high seas,
Ring us about with thousands, we'll not yield,
I and my *Golden Hynde*, we will go down,

With flag still flying on the last stump left us
And all my cannon spitting out the fires
Of everlasting scorn into his face."

So Drake warped out the *Golden Hynde* anew
Behind St Nicholas' Island. She lay there,
The small grey-golden centre of the world
That raged all round her, the last hope, the
star

Of Protestant freedom, she, the outlawed ship
Holding within her the great head and heart
Of England's ocean power; and all the fleets
That have enfranchised earth, in that small
ship,
Lay waiting for their doom.

Past her at night
Fisher-boats glided, wondering as they heard
In the thick darkness the great songs they
deemed
Must oft have risen from many a lonely sea;

For oft had Spaniards brought a rumour back
Of that strange pirate who in royal state
Sailed to a sound of violins, and dined
With skilled musicians round him, turning all
Battle and storm and death into a song.

SONG.

The same Sun is o'er us,
The same Love shall find us,
The same and none other
Wherever we be ;
With the same hope before us,
The same home behind us,
England, our mother,
Ringed round with the sea.

No land in the ring of it
Now, all around us
Only the splendid
Re-surging unknown ;

How should we sing of it,
This that hath found us
By the great stars attended
At midnight, alone?

Our highway none knoweth,
Yet our blood hath discerned it!
Clear, clear is our path now
Whose foreheads are free,
Where the hurricane bloweth
Our spirits have learned it,
'Tis the highway of wrath, now,
The storm's way, the sea.

When the waters lay breathless
Gazing at Hesper
Guarding that glorious
Fruitage of gold,

Heard we the deathless
Wonderful whisper
We follow, victorious
To-night, as of old.

Ah, the broad miles of it
White with the onset
Of waves without number
Warring for glee;
Ah, the soft smiles of it
Down to the sunset,
Sacred for slumber
The swan's bath, the sea!

When the breakers charged thundering
In thousands all round us
With a lightning of lances
Up-hurtled on high,

When the stout ships were sundering
A rapture hath crowned us
Like the wild light that dances
On the crests that flash by.

*Our highway none knoweth,
Yet our blood hath discerned it!
Clear, clear is our path now
Whose foreheads are free,
Where Euroclydon bloweth
Our spirits have learned it,
'Tis the highway of wrath, now,
The storm's way, the sea!*

Who now will follow us
Where England's flag leadeth us,
Where gold not inveigles,
Nor statesmen betray?

Tho' the deep midnight swallow us
Let her cry when she needeth us,
We return, her sea-eagles,
The hurricane's way.

*For the same Sun is o'er us,
The same Love shall find us,
The same and none other
Wherever we be ;
With the same hope before us,
The same home behind us,
England, our mother,
Ringed round with the sea.*

So six days passed, and on the seventh
returned

The courier, with a message from the Queen
Summoning Drake to court, bidding him bring
Also such curious trifles of his voyage

As might amuse her, also be of good cheer
She bade him, and rest well content his life
In Gloriana's hands were safe: so Drake
Laughingly landed with his war-bronzed crew
Amid the wide-eyed throng on Plymouth beach
And loaded twelve big pack-horses with pearls
Beyond all price, diamonds, crosses of gold,
Rubies that smouldered once for Aztec kings,
And great dead Incas' gem-encrusted crowns.
Also, he said, we'll add a sack or twain
Of gold doubloons, pieces of eight, moidores,
And such-like Spanish trash, for those poor
 lords

At court, lilies that toil not neither spin,
Wherefore, methinks their purses oft grow lean
In these harsh times. 'Twere even as well
 their tongues

Wagged in our favour, now, as in our blame.

.
Six days thereafter a fearful whisper reached

Mendoza, plenipotentiary of Spain
In London, that the pirate Drake was now
In secret conference with the Queen, nay
more,
That he, the Master-thief of the golden
world,
Drake, even he, that bloody buccaneer,
Had six hours' audience with her Majesty
Daily, nay more, walked with her in her
garden
Alone, among the fiery Autumn leaves,
Talking of God knows what, and suddenly
The temporizing diplomatic voice
Of caution he was wont to expect from
England
And blandly accept as his imperial due
Changed to a ringing key of firm resolve,
Resistance, nay, defiance. For when he came
Demanding audience of the Queen, behold,
Her officers of state with mouths awry

Informed the high ambassador of Spain,
Despite his pomp and circumstance, the
Queen

Could not receive him, being in conference
With some rough seaman, pirate, what you
will,

A fellow made of bronze, a buccaneer,
Maned like a lion, bearded like a pard,
With hammered head, clamped jaws and
great deep eyes

That burned with fierce blue colours of the
brine,

And liked not Spain — Drake! 'Twas the
very name,

One Francis Drake! a Titan that had stood,
Thundering commands against the thunder-
ing heavens,

On lightning-shattered, storm-swept decks
and drunk

Great draughts of glory from the rolling sea,

El Draque! El Draque! Nor could she
promise aught

To Spain's ambassador, nor see his face
Again, while yet one Spanish musketeer
Remained in Ireland.

Vainly the Spaniard raged
Of restitution, recompense; for now
Had Drake brought up the little *Golden Hynde*
To London, and the rumour of her wealth
Out-topped the wild reality. The crew
Were princes as they swaggered down the
streets

In weather-beaten splendour. Out of their
doors

To wonder and stare the jostling citizens ran
When They went by; and through the
length and breadth

Of England, now, the gathering glory of life
Shone like the dawn. O'er hill and dale it
streamed,

Dawn, everlasting and almighty dawn,
Making a golden pomp of every oak—
Had not its British brethren swept the
seas?—

In each remotest hamlet, by the hearth,
The cart, the grey church-porch, the village
pump,

By meadow and mill and old manorial hall,
By turnpike and by tavern, farm and forge,
Men staved the crimson vintage of romance
And held it up against the light and drank it,
And with it drank confusion to the wrath
That menaced England, but eternal honour,
While blood ran in their veins, to Francis
Drake.

BOOK VIII.

MEANWHILE, young Bess of Sydenham, the
 queen
Of Drake's deep heart, emprisoned in her
 home,
Fenced by her father's angry watch and
 ward
Lest he—the poor plebeian dread of Spain,
Shaker of nations, king of the untamed seas—
Might win some word with her, sweet Bess,
 the flower,
Triumphant o'er their rusty heraldries,
Waited her lover, as in ancient tales
The pale princess from some grey wizard's
 tower

Midmost the deep sigh of enchanted woods
Looks for the starry flash of her knight's
shield;

Or on the further side o' the magic West
Sees pushing through the ethereal golden
gloom

Some blurred black prow, with loaded colours
coarse,

Clouded with sunsets of a mortal sea,
And rich with earthly crimson. She, with
lips

Apart, still waits the shattering golden thrill
When it shall grate the coasts of Fairyland.

Only, to Bess of Sydenham, there came
No sight or sound to break that frozen
spell

And lonely watch, no message from her love,
Or none that reached her restless helpless
hands.

Only the general rumour of the world
Borne to her by the gossip of her maid
Kept the swift pictures flashing through her
brain

Of how the *Golden Hynde* was hauled ashore
At Deptford through a sea of exultation,
And by the Queen's command was now
set up

For an everlasting memory!
Of how the Queen with subtle statecraft
still

Kept Spain at arm's length, dangling, while
she played

At fast and loose with France, whose em-
bassy,

Arriving with the marriage-treaty, found
(And trembled at her daring, since the
wrath

Of Spain seemed, in their eyes, to flake with
foam

The storm-beat hulk) a gorgeous banquet
spread

To greet them on that very *Golden Hynde*
Which sacked the Spanish main, a gorgeous
feast,

The like of which old England had not seen
Since the bluff days of boisterous King Hal,
Great shields of brawn with mustard, roasted
swans,

Haunches of venison, roasted chines of beef,
And chewets baked, big olive-pyes thereto,
And sallets mixed with sugar and cinnamon,
White wine, rose-water, and candied eringoos.
There, on the outlawed ship, whose very
name

Rang like a blasphemy in the imperial ears
Of Spain (its every old worm-eaten plank
Being scored with scorn and courage that
not storm

Nor death, nor all their Inquisition racks,

The white-hot irons and bloody branding
whips
That scarred the backs of Rome's pale galley-
slaves,
Her captured English seamen, ever could
daunt),
There with huge Empires waiting for one
word,
One breath of colour and excuse, to leap
Like wolves at the naked throat of her small
isle,
There in the eyes of the staggered world she
stood,
Great Gloriana, while the live decks reeled
With flash of jewels and flush of rustling
silks,
She stood with Drake, the corsair, and her
people
Surged like a sea around. There did she
give

Open defiance with her agate smile
To Spain. "Behold this pirate, now," she
cried,
"Whose head my Lord, the Invincible, Philip
of Spain
Demands from England. Kneel down, master
Drake,
Kneel down; for now have I this gilded
sword
Wherewith to strike it off. Nay, thou my
lord
Ambassador of France, since I be woman,
And squeamish at the sight of blood, give
thou
The accolade. With that jest she gave the
hilt
(Thus, even in boldness, playing a crafty part,
And dangling France before the adventurous
deed)
To Marchaumont; and in the face of Europe,

With that huge fleet in Cadiz and the whole
World-power of Spain crouching around her
isle,

Knighted the master-thief of the unknown
world,

Sir Francis Drake.

And then the rumour came
Of vaster privateerings planned by Drake
Against the coasts of Philip; but held in
check

And fretting at the leash, as ever the Queen
Clung to her state-craft, while Drake's
enemies

Worked in the dark against him. Spain
had set

An emperor's ransom on his life. At home
John Doughty, treacherous brother of that
traitor

Who met his doom by Drake's own hand,
intrigued

With Spain abroad and Spain's dark emis-
saries

At home to avenge his brother. Burleigh
still

Beset Drake's path with pitfalls: treacherous
greed

For Spain's blood-money daggered all the dark
Around him, and John Doughty without cease
Sought to make use of all; until, by chance,
Drake gat the proof of treasonable intrigue
With Spain, against him, up to the deadly
hilt,

And hurled him into the Tower.

Many a night

She sat by that old casement nigh the sea
And heard its ebb and flow. With soul
erect

And splendid now she waited, yet there came
No message; and, she thought, he hath seen
at last

My little worth. And when her maiden sang,
With white throat throbbing softly in the
dusk

And fingers gently straying o'er the lute,
As was her wont at twilight, some old song
Of high disdainful queens and lovers pale
Pining a thousand years before their feet,
She thought, "O, if my lover loved me yet
My heart would break for joy to welcome
him :

Perchance his true pride will not let him
come

Since false pride barred him out"; and yet
again

She burned with shame, thinking, "to him
such pride

Were matter for a jest. Ah no, he hath seen
My little worth." Even so, one night she sat,
One dark rich summer night, thinking him far
Away, wrapped in the multitudinous cares

Of one that seemed the steersman of the State
Now, thro' the storm of Europe; while her
 maid
Sang to the lute, and soft sea-breezes brought
Wreathed scents and sighs of secret waves
 and flowers
Warm through the casement's muffling jas-
 mine bloom.

SONG.

I.

*Nymphs and naiads, come away,
 Love lies dead!
Cover the cast-back golden head,
Cover the lovely limbs with may,
 And with fairest boughs of green,
And many a rose-wreathed briar spray;
 But let no hateful yew be seen
 Where Love lies dead.*

II.

*Let not the queen that would not hear,
(Love lies dead!)
Or beauty that refused to save,
Exult in one dejected tear;
But gather the glory of the year,
The pomp and glory of the year,
The triumphing glory of the year,
And softly, softly, softly shed
Its light and fragrance round the grave
Where Love lies dead.*

The song ceased. Far away the great sea
slept,
And all was very still. Only hard by
One bird-throat poured its passion through
the gloom,
And the whole night seemed breathlessly
listening,

As though earth's fairies, at the moon's
command,

Had muffled all the flower-bells in the world
That God might hear His nightingale.

A twig
Snapped, the song ceased, the intense dumb
night was all

One passion of expectation—as if that song
Were prelude, and ere long the heavens and
earth

Would burst into one great triumphant psalm.
The song ceased only as if that small bird-
throat

Availed no further. Would the next great
chord

Ring out from harps in flaming seraph hands
Ranged through the sky? The night
watched, breathless, dumb.

Bess listened. Once again a dry twig snapped
Beneath her casement, and a face looked up,

Draining her face of blood, of sight, of life,
Whispering, a voice from far beyond the
stars,

Whispering, unutterable joy, the whole
Glory of life and death in one small word—
Sweetheart!

The jasmine at her casement shook,
She knew no more than he was at her side,
His arms were round her, and his breath
beat warm
Against her cheek.

.
Suddenly, nigh the house,
A deep-mouthed mastiff bayed and a foot
crunched
The gravel. "Ah, hark! they are watching
for thee," she cried.
He laughed: "There's half of Europe on
the watch
Outside for my poor head. 'Tis cosier here

With thee; but now"—his face grew grave,
he drew

A silken ladder from out his doublet—"quick,
Before yon good gamekeeper rounds the house
We must be down." And ere the words
were out

Bess reached the path, and Drake was at
her side.

Then into the star-stabbed shadow of the
woods

They sped, his arm around her. Suddenly
She drew back with a cry, as four grim faces,
With hand to forelock, glimmered in their way.
Laughing she saw their storm-beat friendly
smile

Welcome their doughty captain in this new
Adventure. Far away, once more they heard
The mastiff bay; then nearer, as if his nose
Were down upon the trail; and then a cry
As of a hot pursuit. They reached the brook,

Hurrying to the deep. Drake lifted Bess
In his arms, and down the watery bed they
splashed
To baffle the clamouring hunt. Then out of
the woods
They came, on the seaward side, and Bess,
with a shiver,
Saw starlight flashing from bare cutlasses,
As the mastiff bayed still nearer. Swiftlier now
They passed along the bare blunt cliffs
and saw
The furrow ploughed by that strange cannon-
shot
Which saved this hour for Bess; down to
the beach
And starry foam that churned the silver gravel
Around an old black lurching boat, a strange
Grim Charon's wherry for two lovers' flight,
Guarded by old Tom Moone. Drake took
her hand,

And with one arm around her waist, her
breath

Warm on his cheek for a moment, in she
stepped

Daintily o'er the gunwale, and took her seat,
His throned princess, beside him at the helm,
Backed by the glittering waves, his throned
princess,

With jewelled throat and glorious hair that
seemed

Flashing back scents and colours to a sea
Which lived but to reflect her loveliness.

Then, all together, with their brandished oars
The seamen thrust as a heavy mounded wave
Lifted the boat; and up the flowering breast
Of the next they soared, then settled at the
thwarts,

And the fierce water boiled before their blades
While with Drake's iron hand upon the helm

They plunged and ploughed across the starlit
seas

To where a small black lugger at anchor
swung,

Dipping her rakish bows i' the liquid moon.
Small was she, but not fangless; for Bess
saw,

With half a tremor, the dumb protective grin
Of four grim guns above the tossing boat.

But ere his seamen or his sweetheart knew
What power, as of a wind, bore them along,
Anchor was up, the sails were broken out,
And as they scudded down the dim grey
coast

Of a new enchanted world (for now had Love
Made all things new and strange) the skilled
musicians

Upraised, at Drake's command, a song to
cheer

Their midnight path across that faery sea.

SONG.

I.

Sweet, what is love? 'Tis not the crown of
kings,

Nay, nor the fire of white seraphic wings!
Is it a child's heart leaping while he sings?

Even so say I;

Even so say I.

II.

Love like a child around our world doth
run,

Happy, happy, happy for all that God hath
done,

Glad of all the little leaves dancing in
the sun,

Even so say I;

Even so say I.

III.

Sweet, what is love? 'Tis not the burning
 bliss
Angels know in heaven! God blows the
 world a kiss
Wakes on earth a wild-rose! Ah, who knows
 not this?
 Even so say I;
 Even so say I.

IV.

Love, love is kind! Can it be far away,
Lost in a light that blinds our little day?
Seems it a great thing? Sweetheart, answer
 nay;
 Even so say I;
 Even so say I.

v.

Sweet, what is love? The dust beneath
our feet,
Whence breaks the rose and all the flowers
that greet
April and May with lips and heart so
sweet;
Even so say I;
Even so say I.

vi.

Love is the dust whence Eden grew so
fair,
Dust of the dust that set my lover there,
Ay, and wrought the gloriole of Eve's gold
hair,
Even so say I;
Even so say I.

VII.

Also the springing spray, the little topmost
flower

Swung by the bird that sings a little hour,
Earth's climbing spray into the heaven's blue
bower,

Even so say I;

Even so say I.

And stranger, ever stranger, grew the night
Around those twain, for whom the fleecy
moon

Was but a mightier Cleopatra's pearl
Dissolving in the rich dark wine of night,
While 'mid the tenderer talk of eyes and
hands

And whispered nothings, his imperial dreams
Rolled round their gloomy barge, robing its
hulk

With splendours Rome and Egypt never
knew.

Old ocean was his Nile, his mighty queen
An English maiden purer than the dawn,
His cause the cause of Freedom, his reward
The glory of England. Strangely simple,
then,

Simple as life and death, anguish and love,
To Bess appeared those mighty dawning
dreams,

Whereby he shaped the pageant of the
world

To a new purpose, strangely simple all
Those great new waking tides i' the world's
great soul

That set towards the fall of Spain and
Rome

Behind a thunderous roar of ocean triumph
O'er burning ships and shattered fleets, while
England

Grasped with sure hands the sceptre of the
sea,

That untamed realm of Liberty which none
Had looked upon as aught but wilderness
Ere this, or even dreamed of as the seat
Of power and judgment and high sovereignty
Whereby all nations at the last should
make

One brotherhood, and war should be no
more.

And ever, as the vision broadened out,
The sense of some tremendous change at
hand,

The approach of vast Armadas and the
dawn

Of battle, reddening the diviner dawn
With clouds, confused it, till once more the
song

Rang out triumphant o'er the glittering sea.

SONG.

I.

*Ye that follow the vision
Of the world's weal afar,
Have ye met with derision
And the red laugh of war ;
Yet the thunder shall not hurt you,
Nor the battle-storms dismay ;
Tho' the sun in heaven desert you,
" Love will find out the way."*

II.

*When the pulse of hope falters,
When the fire flickers low
On your faith's crumbling altars,
And the faithless gods go ;
When the fond hope ye cherished
Cometh, kissing, to betray ;
When the last star hath perished,
" Love will find out the way."*

III.

*When the last dream bereaveth you,
And the heart turns to stone,
When the last comrade leaveth you
In the desert, alone ;
With the whole world before you
Clad in battle-array,
And the starless night o'er you,
"Love will find out the way."*

IV.

*Your dreamers may dream it
The shadow of a dream,
Your sages may deem it
A bubble on the stream ;
Yet our kingdom draweth nigher
With each dawn and every day,
Through the earthquake and the fire
"Love will find out the way."*

v.

*Love will find it, tho' the nations
Rise up blind, as of old,
And the new generations
Wage their warfares of gold;
Tho' they trample child and mother
As red clay into the clay,
Where brother wars with brother,
"Love will find out the way."*

Dawn, ever bearing some divine increase
Of beauty, love, and wisdom round the world,
Dawn, like a wild-rose in the fields of
heaven
Washed grey with dew, awoke, and found
the barque
At anchor in a little land-locked bay.
A crisp breeze blew, and all the living sea
Beneath the flower-soft colours of the sky,

Now like a myriad-petalled rose and now
Innumerably scalloped into shells
Of rosy fire, with dwindling wrinkles edged
Fainter and fainter to the unruffled glow
And soft white pallor of the distant deep,
Shone with a mystic beauty for those twain
Who watched the gathering glory; and, in
 an hour,
Drake and sweet Bess, attended by a guard
Of four swart seamen, with bare cutlasses,
And by the faithful eyes of old Tom Moone,
Went up the rough rock-steps and twisted
 street
O' the small white sparkling seaport, tow'rds
 the church
Where, hand in hand, before God's altar
 they,
With steadfast eyes, did plight eternal troth,
And so were wedded. Never a chime of
 bells

Had they; but as they passed from out the
porch

Between the sleeping graves, a skylark soared
Above the world in an ecstasy of song,
And quivering heavenwards, lost himself in
light.

BOOK IX.

Now like a white-cliffed fortress England
shone

Amid the mirk of chaos; for the huge
Empire of Spain was but the dusky van
Of that dread night beyond all nights and
days,

Night of the last corruption of a world
Fast-bound in misery and iron, with chains
Of priest and king and feudal servitude,
Night of the fettered flesh and ravaged soul,
Night of anarchic chaos, darkening the deep,
Swallowing up cities, kingdoms, empires,
gods,

With vaster gloom approaching, till the sun

Of love was blackened, the moon of faith
was blood.

All round our England, our small struggling
star,

Fortress of freedom, rock o' the world's desire,
Bearing at last the hope of all mankind,
The thickening darkness surged, and close at
hand

Those first fierce cloudy fringes of the storm,
The Armada sails, gathered their might;
and Rome

Crouched close behind them with her scream-
ing fires

And steaming shambles, Rome, the hell-hag,
crouched,

Still grasping with red hand the cross of
Christ

By its great hilt, pointing it like a dagger,
Spear-head of the ultimate darkness, at the
throat

Of England. Under Philip's feet at last
Writhed all the Protestant Netherlands, dim
coasts

Right over against us, whence his panoplies
Might suddenly overwhelm our isle. But all
night long,

On many a mountain, many a guardian
height,

From Beachy Head to Skiddaw, little groups
Of seamen, torch and battle-lantern nigh,
Watched by the brooding unlit beacons, piled
Of furze and gorse, funereal peat, rough logs,
Reeking with oil, 'mid sharp scents of the
sea,

Waste trampled grass and heather and close-
cropped thyme,

High o'er the thundering coast, among whose
rocks

Far, far below, the pacing coastguards gazed
Steadfastly seaward through the loaded dusk.

And through that deepening gloom when, as
it seemed,
All England held her breath in one grim
doubt,
Swift rumours flashed from North to South
as runs
The lightning round a silent thunder-cloud;
And there were muttering crowds i' the
London streets,
And hurrying feet i' the brooding Eastern
ports.
All night, dark inns, gathering the country-
side,
Reddened with clashing auguries of war.
All night, i' the ships of Plymouth Sound,
the soul
Of Francis Drake was England, and all
night
Her singing seamen by the silver quays
Polished their guns and waited for the dawn.

But hour by hour that night grew deeper.

Spain

Watched, cloud by cloud, her huge Armadas
grow,

Watched, tower by tower, and zone by zone,
her fleets

Grapple the sky with a hundred hands and
drag

Whole sea-horizons into her menacing ranks,
Joining her powers to the fierce night, while
Philip

Still strove, with many a crafty word, to lull
The fears of Gloriana, till his plots

Were ripe, his armaments complete; and still
Great Gloriana took her woman's way,

Preferring ever tortuous intrigue

To battle, since the stakes had grown so
great;

Now, more than ever, hoping against hope

To find some subtler means of victory;

Yet not without swift impulses to strike,
Swiftly recalled. Blind, yet not blind, she
smiled

On Mary of Scotland waiting for her throne,
A throne with many a strange dark tremor
thrilled

Now as the rumoured murderous mines below
Converged towards it, mine and counter mine,
Till the live earth was honeycombed with
death.

Still with her agate smile, still she delayed,
Holding her pirate admiral in the leash,
Till Walsingham, nay, even the hunchback
Burleigh,

That crafty king of statesmen, seeing at last
The inevitable thunder-crash at hand,
Grew heart-sick with delay and ached to
shatter

The tense tremendous hush that seemed to
oppress

All hearts, compress all brows, load the
broad night
With more than mortal menace.

Only once
The night was traversed with one lightning
flash,
One rapier stroke from England, at the heart
Of Spain, as swiftly parried, yet no less
A fiery challenge; for Philip's hate and scorn
Growing with his Armada's growth, he lured
With promises of just and friendly trade
A fleet of English corn-ships to relieve
His famine-stricken coast. There as they lay
Within his ports he seized them, one and all,
To fill the Armada's maw.

Whereat the Queen,
Passive so long, summoned great Wal-
singham,
And, still averse from open war, despite
The battle-hunger burning in his eyes,

With one strange swift sharp agate smile
she hissed,

“Unchain *El Draque*!”

A lightning flash indeed
Was this; for he whose little *Golden Hynde*
With scarce a score of seamen late had
scourged

The Spanish Main; he whose piratic neck
Scarcely the Queen’s most wily statecraft
saved

From Spain’s revenge: he, privateer to the
eyes

Of Spain, but England to all English hearts,
Gathered together, in all good jollity,
All help and furtherance himself could wish,
Before that moon was out, a pirate fleet
Whereof the like old ocean had not seen—
Eighteen swift cruisers, two great battle-
ships,

With pinnaces and store-ships and a force

Of nigh three thousand men, wherewith to
singe

The beard o' the King of Spain.

By night they gathered
In marvellous wind-whipt inns nigh Ply-
mouth Sound,

Not secretly as, ere the *Golden Hynde*
Burst thro' the West, that small adventurous
crew

Gathered beside the Thames, tossing the
phrase

"Pieces of eight" from mouth to mouth,
and singing

Great songs of the rich Indies, and those tall
Enchanted galleons, red with blood and gold,
Superb with rubies, glorious as clouds,
Clouds i' the sun, with mighty press of sail
Dragging the sunset out of the unknown
world,

And staining all the grey old seas of Time

With rich romance; but these, though
privateers,
Or secret knights on Gloriana's quest,
Recked not if round the glowing magic
door
Of every inn the townsfolk grouped to hear
The storm-scarred seamen toasting Francis
Drake,
Nor heeded what blithe urchin faces pressed
On each red-curtained magic casement, bright
With wild reflection of the fires within,
The fires, the glasses, and the singing lips
Lifting defiance to the powers of Spain.

SONG.

Sing we the Rose,
The flower of flowers most glorious!
Never a storm that blows
Across our English sea,

But its heart breaks out wi' the Rose
On England's flag victorious,
The triumphing flag that flows
Thro' the heavens of Liberty.

Sing we the Rose,
The flower of flowers most beautiful!
Until the world shall end
She blossometh year by year,
Red with the blood that flows
For England's sake, most dutiful,
Wherefore now we bend
Our hearts and knees to her.

Sing we the Rose,
The flower, the flower of war it is,
Where deep i' the midnight gloom
Its waves are the waves of the sea,

And the glare of battle grows,
And red over hulk and spar it is,
Till the grim black broadsides bloom
With our Rose of Victory.

Sing we the Rose,
The flower, the flower of love it is,
Which lovers aye shall sing
And nightingales proclaim;
For O, the heaven that glows,
That glows and burns above it is
Freedom's perpetual Spring,
Our England's faithful fame.

Sing we the Rose,
That Eastward still shall spread for us
Upon the dawn's bright breast,
Red leaves wi' the foam impearled;

And onward ever flows
Till eventide make red for us
A Rose that sinks i' the West
And surges round the world;
Sing we the Rose!

One night as, with his great vice-admiral,
Frobisher, his rear-admiral, Francis Knollys,
And Thomas Fenner, his flag-captain, Drake
Took counsel at his tavern, there came a
knock,
The door opened, and cold as from the sea
The gloom rushed in, and there against the
night,
Clad as it seemed with wind and cloud and
rain,
Glittered a courtier whom by face and form
All knew for the age's brilliant paladin,
Sidney, the king of courtesy, a star
Of chivalry. The seamen stared at him,

Each with a hand upon the red-lined chart
Outspread before them. Then all stared at
Drake,
Who crouched like a great bloodhound o'er
the table,
And rose with a strange light burning in his
eyes;
For he remembered how, three years ago,
That other courtier came, with words and
smiles
Copied from Sidney's self; and in his ears
Rang once again the sound of the heads-
man's axe
Upon the desolate Patagonian shore
Beneath Magellan's gallows. With a voice
So harsh himself scarce knew it, he desired
This fair new courtier's errand. With grim
eyes
He scanned the silken knight from head to
foot,

While Sidney, smiling graciously, besought
Some place in their adventure. Drake's
clenched fist

Crashed down on the old oak table like a rock,
Splintering the wood and dashing his rough
wrist

With blood, as he thundered, "By the living
God,

No! We've no room for courtiers, now!

We leave

All that to Spain."

Whereat, seeing Sidney stood
Amazed, Drake, drawing nearer, said, "You
ask

More than you dream: I know you for a
knight

Most perfect and most gentle, yea, a man

Ready to die on any battle-field

To save a wounded friend" (even so said
Drake,

Not knowing how indeed this knight would
die,

Yea, yield the cup of water from his lips
To save a wounded soldier, saying, "His need
Is greater!")

Drake outstretched his bleeding hand
And pointed through the door to where the
gloom

Glimmered with bursting spray, and the thick
night

Was all one wandering thunder of hidden seas
Rolling out of Eternity: "You'll find
No purple fields of Arcady out there,
No shepherds piping in those boisterous
valleys,

No sheep among those roaring mountain-tops,
No lists of feudal chivalry. I've heard
That voice cry death to courtiers. 'Tis
God's voice.

Take you the word of one who has occupied

His business in great waters. There's no
room,

Meaning, or reason, office, or place, or name
For courtiers on the sea. Does the sea
flatter?

You cannot bribe it, torture it, or tame it!
Its laws are those of the Juggernaut universe,
Remorseless—listen to that!"—a mighty wave
Broke thundering down the coast; "your
hands are white,

Your rapier jewelled, can you grapple that?
What part have you in all its flaming ways?
What share in its fierce gloom? Has your
heart broken

As those waves break out there? Can you
lie down

And sleep, as a lion-cub by the old lion,
When it shakes its mane out over you to
hide you,

And leap out with the dawn as I have done?

These are big words; but, see, my hand is
red :

You cannot torture me, I have borne all
that;

And so I have some kinship with the sea,
Some sort of wild alliance with its storms,
Its exultations, ay, and its great wrath
At last, and power upon them. 'Tis the
worse

For Spain. Be counselled well: come not
between

My sea and its rich vengeance."

Silently,

Bowing his head, Sidney withdrew. But
Drake,

So fiercely the old grief rankled in his heart,
Summoned his swiftest horseman, bidding
him ride,

Ride like the wind through the night, straight
to the Queen,

Praying she would most instantly recall
Her truant courtier. Nay, to make all sure,
Drake sent a gang of seamen out to crouch
Ambushed in woody hollows nigh the road,
Under the sailing moon, there to waylay
The Queen's reply, that she might never
 know
It reached him, if it proved against his will.

And swiftly came that truant's stern recall;
But Drake, in hourly dread of some new
 change
In Gloriana's mood, slept not by night
Or day, till out of roaring Plymouth Sound
The pirate fleet swept to the wind-swept
 main,
And took the wind and shook out all its
 sails.
Then with the unfettered sea he mixed his
 soul

In great rejoicing union, while the ships
Crashing and soaring o'er the heart-free
waves

Drave ever straight for Spain.

Water and food
They lacked ; but the fierce fever of his mind
To sail from Plymouth ere the Queen's will
changed

Had left no time for these. Right on he
drave,

Determining, though the Queen's old officers
Beneath him stood appalled, to take in stores
Of all he needed, water, powder, food,
By plunder of Spain herself. In Vigo bay,
Close to Bayona town, under the cliffs
Of Spain's world-wide and thunder-fraught
prestige

He anchored, with the old sea-touch that
wakes

Our England still. There, in the tingling ears

Of the world he cried, *En garde!* to the
King of Spain.

There, ordering out his pinnaces in force,
While a great storm, as if he held indeed
Heaven's batteries in reserve, growled o'er
the sea,

He landed. Ere one cumbrous limb of all
The monstrous armaments of Spain could
move

His ships were stored; and ere the sword of
Spain

Stirred in its crusted sheath, Bayona town
Beheld an empty sea; for like a dream
The pirate fleet had vanished, none knew
whither.

But, in its visible stead, invisible fear
Filled the vast rondure of the sea and sky
As with the omnipresent soul of Drake.
For when Spain saw the small black
anchored fleet.

Ride in her bays, the sight set bounds to fear.
She knew at least the ships were oak, the
guns

Of common range: nor did she dream e'en
Drake

Could sail two seas at once. Now all her
coasts

Heard him all night in every bursting wave,
His topsails gleamed in every moonlit cloud;
His battle-lanterns glittered in the stars
That hung the low horizon. He became
A universal menace; yet there followed
No sight or sound of him, unless the sea
Were that grim soul incarnate. Did it not
roar

His great commands? The very spray that
lashed

The cheeks of Spanish seamen lashed their
hearts

To helpless hatred of him. The wind sang

El Draque across the rattling blocks and
sheets

When storms perplexed them; and when
ships went down,

As under the fury of his onsetting battle,
The drowning sailors cursed him while they
sank.

Suddenly a rumour shook the Spanish Court,
He has gone once more to the Indies.

Santa Cruz,

High Admiral of Spain, the most renowned
Captain in Europe, clamoured for a fleet
Of forty sail instantly to pursue.

For unto him whose little *Golden Hynde*
Was weapon enough, now leading such a
squadron,

The West Indies, the whole Pacific coast,
And the whole Spanish Main, lay at his
mercy.

And onward over the great grey gleaming
sea

Swept like a thunder-cloud the pirate fleet
With vengeance in its heart. Five years
agone,

Young Hawkins, in the Cape Verde Islands,
met—

At Santiago—with such treachery

As Drake burned to requite, and from
that hour

Was Santiago doomed. His chance had
come,

Drake swooped upon it, plundered it, and
was gone,

Leaving the treacherous isle a desolate heap
Of smoking ashes in the leaden sea,

While onward all those pirate bowsprits
plunged

Into the golden West, across the broad
Atlantic once again; “For I will show,”

Said Drake, "that Englishmen henceforth
will sail

Old ocean where they will." Onward they
surged,

And the great glittering crested majestic
waves

Jubilantly rushed up to meet the keels,
And there was nought around them but
the grey

Ruin and roar of the huge Atlantic seas,
Grey mounded seas, pursuing and pursued,
That fly, hounded and hounding on for ever,
From empty marge to marge of the grey
sky.

Over the wandering wilderness of foam,
Onward, through storm and death, Drake
swept; for now

Once more a fell plague gripped the tossing
ships,

And not by twos and threes as heretofore

His crews were minished; but in three
black days

Three hundred seamen in their shotted
shrouds

Were cast into the deep. Onward he swept,
Implacably, having in mind to strike
Spain in the throat at St Domingo, port
Of Hispaniola, a city of far renown,
A jewel on the shores of old romance,
Palm-shadowed, gated with immortal gold,
Queen city of Spain's dominions over sea,
And guarded by great guns. Out of the
dawn

The pirate ships came leaping, grim and
black,

And ere the Spaniards were awake, the flag
Of England floated from their topmost tower.
But since he had not troops enough to hold
So great a city, Drake entrenched his men
Within the Plaza and held the batteries.

Thence he demanded ransom, and sent out
A boy with flag of truce. The boy's return
Drake waited long. Under a sheltering palm
He stood, watching the enemies' camp, and lo,
Along the hot white purple-shadowed road
Tow'rds him, a crawling shape writhed
through the dust

Up to his feet, a shape besmeared with
blood,

A shape that held the stumps up of its
wrists

And moaned, an eyeless thing, a naked rag
Of flesh obscenely mangled, a small face
Hideously puckered, shrivelled like a monkey's,
With lips drawn backward from its teeth.

“Speak, speak,
In God's name, speak, what art thou?”
whispered Drake,

And a sharp cry came, answering his dread,
A cry as of a sea-bird in the wind

Desolately astray from all earth's shores,
"Captain, I am thy boy, only thy boy!
See, see, my captain, see what they have
done!
Captain, I only bore the flag; I only——"

"O, lad, lad, lad," moaned Drake, and,
stooping, strove
To pillow the mangled head upon his arm.
"What have they done to thee, what have
they done?"
And at the touch the boy screamed, once,
and died.

Then like a savage sea with arms uplift
To heaven the wrath of Drake blazed
thundering,
"Eternal God, be this the doom of Spain!
Henceforward have no pity. Send the strength
Of Thy great seas into my soul that I

May devastate this empire, this red hell
They make of Thy good earth."

His men drew round,
Staring in horror at the silent shape
That daubed his feet. Like a cold wind
His words went through their flesh:

"This is the lad
That bore our flag of truce. This hath
Spain done.

Look well upon it, draw the smoke of the
blood

Up into your nostrils, my companions,
And down into your souls. This makes
an end

For Spain! Bring forth the Spanish prisoners
And let me look on them."

Forth they were brought,
A swarthy gorgeous band of soldiers, priests,
And sailors, hedged between two sturdy files
Of British tars with naked cutlasses.

Close up to Drake they halted, under the
palm,
Gay smiling prisoners, for they thought their
friends
Had ransomed them. Then they looked up
and met
A glance that swept athwart them like a
sword,
Making the blood strain back from their
blanched faces
Into their quivering hearts, with unknown
dread,
As that accuser pointed to the shape
Before his feet.

“Dogs, will ye lap his blood
Before ye die? Make haste; for it grows
cold!

Ye will not, will not even dabble your hands
In that red puddle of flesh, what? Are ye
Spaniards?

Come, come, I'll look at you, perchance
there's one

That's but a demi-devil and holds you
back."

And with the word Drake stepped among
their ranks

And read each face among the swarthy crew—
The gorgeous soldiers, ringleted sailors, priests
With rosary and cross, a slender page
In scarlet with a cloud of golden hair,
And two rope-girdled friars.

The slim page
Drake drew before the throng. "You are
young," he said,

"Go; take this message to the camp of
Spain,

Tell them I have a hunger in my soul
To look upon the murderers of this boy,
To see what eyes they have, what manner
of mouths,

To touch them and to take their hands in
mine,

And draw them close to me and smile upon
them

Until they know my soul as I know theirs,
And they grovel in the dust and grope for
mercy.

Say that, until I get them, every day
I'll hang two Spaniards though I dispeople
The Spanish Main. Tell them that, every day,
I'll burn a portion of their city down,
Then find another city and burn that,
And then burn others till I burn away
Their empire from the world, ay, till I reach
The imperial throne of Philip with my fires,
And send it shrieking down to burn in hell
For ever. Go!"

Then Drake turned once again
To face the Spanish prisoners. With a voice
Cold as the passionless utterance of Fate

His grim command went forth. "Now,
provost-marshal,
Begin with yon two friars, in whose faces
Chined like singed swine, and eyed with
the spent coals
Of filthy living, sweats the glory of Rome
And Spain combined, strip off their leprous
rags
And twist their ropes around their throats
and hang them
High over the Spanish camp for all to see.
At dawn I'll choose two more."

BOOK X.

ACROSS the Atlantic

Great rumours rushed as of a mighty wind,
The wind of the spirit of Drake. But who
shall tell

In this cold age the power that he became
Who drew the universe within his soul
And moved with cosmic forces? Though
the deep

Divided it from Drake, the gorgeous court
Of Philip shuddered away from the stream-
ing coasts

As a wind-cuffed field of golden wheat. The
King,

Bidding his guests to a feast in his own ship

On that wind-darkened sea, was made a mock,
As one by one his ladies proffered excuse
For fear of That beyond. Round Europe now
Ballad and story told how in the cabin
Of Francis Drake there hung a magic glass
Wherein he saw the fleets of all his enemies
And all that passed aboard them. Rome
herself,
Perplexed that this proud heretic should
prevail,
Fostered a darker dream, that Drake had
bought,
Like old Norse wizards, power to loose or
bind
The winds at will.

And now a wilder tale
Flashed o'er the deep—of a distant blood-red
dawn
O'er San Domingo, where the embattled
troops

Of Spain and Drake were met—but not in
war—

Met in the dawn, by his compelling will,
To offer up a sacrifice. Yea, there
Between the hosts, the hands of Spain herself
Slaughtered the Spanish murderers of the boy
Who had borne Drake's flag of truce; offered
them up

As a blood-offering and an expiation
Lest Drake, with that dread alchemy of his
soul,
Should e'en transmute the dust beneath their
feet

To one same substance with the place of pain
And whelm them suddenly in the eternal fires.
Rumour on rumour rushed across the sea,
Large mockeries, and one most bitter of all,
Wormwood to Philip, of how Drake had stood
I' the governor's house at San Domingo, and
seen

A mighty scutcheon of the King of Spain
Whereon was painted the terrestrial globe,
And on the globe a mighty steed in act
To spring into the heavens, and from its
mouth

Streaming like smoke a scroll, and on the
scroll

Three words of flame and fury—*Non sufficit*
Orbis—of how Drake and his seamen stood
Gazing upon it, and could not forbear
From summoning the Spaniards to expound
Its meaning, whereupon a hurricane roar
Of mirth burst from those bearded British
lips,
And that immortal laughter shook the world.

So, while the imperial warrior eyes of Spain
Watched, every hour, her vast Armada grow
Readier to launch and shatter with one
stroke

Our island's frail defence, fear gripped her
still,

For there came sounds across the heaving sea
Of secret springs unsealed, forces unchained,
A mustering of deep elemental powers,
A sound as of the burgeoning of boughs
In universal April and dead hearts
Uprising from their tombs; a mighty cry
Of resurrection, surging through the souls
Of all mankind. For now the last wild tale
Swept like another dawn across the deep;
And, in that dawn, men saw the slaves of
Spain,

The mutilated negroes of the mines,
With gaunt backs wealed and branded, scarred
and seared

By whip and iron, in Spain's brute lust for
gold,

Saw them, at Drake's great liberating word
Burst from their chains, erect, uplifting hands

Of rapture to the glad new light that then,
Then first, began to struggle thro' the clouds
And crown all manhood with a sacred crown
August—a light which, though from age to age
Clouds may obscure it, grows and still shall
grow,
Until that Kingdom come, that grand Com-
munion,
That Commonweal, that Empire, which still
draws
Nigher with every hour, that Federation,
That turning of the wasteful strength of war
To accomplish large and fruitful tasks of
peace,
That gathering up of one another's loads
Whereby the weak are strengthened and the
strong
Made stronger in the increasing good of all.
Then, suddenly, it seemed, as he had gone,
A ship came stealing into Plymouth Sound

And Drake was home again, but not to rest;
For scarce had he cast anchor ere the road
To London rang beneath the flying hoofs
That bore his brief despatch to Burleigh,
saying—

“We have missed the Plate Fleet by but
twelve hours’ sail,

The reason being best known to God. No
less

We have given a cooling to the King of
Spain.

There is a great gap opened which, methinks,
Is little to his liking. We have sacked
The towns of his chief Indies, burnt their
ships,

Captured great store of gold and precious
stones,

Three hundred pieces of artillery,

The more part brass. Our loss is heavy
indeed,

Under the hand of God, eight hundred men,
Three parts of them by sickness. Captain

Moon,

My trusty old companion, he that struck
The first blow in the South Seas at a
Spaniard,

Died of a grievous wound at Cartagena.

My fleet and I are ready to strike again
At once, where'er the Queen and England
please.

I pray for her commands, and those with
speed,

That I may strike again." Outside the scroll
These words were writ once more—"My
Queen's commands

I much desire, your servant, Francis Drake."

This terse despatch the hunchback Burleigh
read

Thrice over, with the broad cliff of his brow

Bending among his books. Thrice he assayed
To steel himself with caution as of old ;
And thrice, as a glorious lightning running
along
And flashing between those simple words, he
saw
The great new power that lay at England's
hand,
An ocean-sovereignty, a power unknown
Before, but dawning now ; a power that swept
All earth's old plots and counterplots away
Like straws ; the germ of an unmeasured
force
New-born, that laid the source of Spanish
might
At England's mercy ! Could that force but
grow
Ere Spain should nip it, ere the mighty host
That waited in the Netherlands even now,
That host of thirty thousand men encamped

Round Antwerp, under Parma, should embark
Convoyed by that Invincible Armada
To leap at England's throat! Thrice he
assayed

To think of England's helplessness, her ships
Little and few. Thrice he assayed to quench
With caution the high furnace of his soul
Which Drake had kindled. As he read the
last

Rough simple plea, *I wait my Queen's
commands,*

His deep eyes flashed with glorious tears.

He leapt
To his feet and cried aloud, "Before my God,
I am proud, I am very proud for England's
sake!

This Drake is a terrible man to the King of
Spain."

And still, still, Gloriana, brooding darkly

On Mary of Scotland's doom, who now
at last

Was plucked from out her bosom like a
snake

Hissing of war with France, a queenly
snake,

A Lilith in whose lovely gleaming folds
And sexual bonds the judgment of mankind
Writhes even yet half-strangled, meting out
Wild execrations on the maiden Queen
Who quenched those jewelled eyes and mixt
with dust

That white and crimson, who with cold sharp
steel

In substance and in spirit, severed the neck
And straightened out those glittering supple
coils

For ever ; though for evermore will men
Lie subject to the unforgotten gleam
Of diamond eyes and cruel crimson mouth,

And curse the sword-bright intellect that
struck

Like lightning far through Europe and the
world

For England, when amid the embattled fury
Of world-wide empires, England stood alone.
Still she held back from war, still disavowed
The deeds of Drake to Spain; and yet once
more

Philip, resolved at last never to swerve
By one digressive stroke, one ell or inch
From his own patient, sure, laborious path,
Accepted her suave plea, and with all speed
Pressed on his huge emprise until it seemed
His coasts groaned with grim bulks of
cannonry,

Thick loaded hulks of thunder and towers of
doom;

And, all round Antwerp, Parma still prepared
To hurl such armies o'er the rolling sea

As in all history hardly the earth herself
Felt shake with terror her own green hills
and plains.

I wait my Queen's commands! Despite the
plea

Urged every hour upon her with the fire
That burned for action in the soul of Drake,
Still she delayed, till on one darkling eve
She gave him audience in that glimmering
room

Where first he saw her. Strangely sounded
there

The seaman's rough strong passion as he
poured

His heart before her, pleading—"Every hour
Is one more victory lost," and only heard
The bitter answer—"Nay, but every hour
Is a breath snatched from the unconquerable
Doom, that awaits us if we are forced to
war.

Yea, and who knows?—though Spain may
forge a sword,
Its point is not inevitably bared
Against the breast of England!" As she
spake,
The winds without clamoured with clash of
bells,
There was a gleam of torches and a roar—
Mary, the traitress of the North, is dead,
God save the Queen!

Her head bent down: she wept.
"Pity me, friend, though I be queen, O yet
My heart is woman, and I am sore pressed
On every side,—Scotland and France and
Spain

Beset me and I know not where to turn."
Even as she spake, there came a hurried step
Into that dim rich chamber. Walsingham
Stood there, before her, without ceremony
Thrusting a letter forth: "At last," he cried,

"Your Majesty may read the full intent
Of Spain and Rome. Here, plainly written
out

Upon this paper, worth your kingdom's crown,
This letter, stolen by a trusty spy,
Out of the inmost chamber of the Pope
Sixtus himself, here is your murder planned:
Blame not your Ministers who with such
haste

Plucked out this viper, Mary, from your
breast!

Read here—how, with his thirty thousand
men,

The pick of Europe, Parma joins the Scots,
While Ireland, grasped in their Armada's
clutch,

And the Isle of Wight, against our west and
south

Become their base."

"Rome, Rome, and Rome again,

And always Rome," she muttered ; " even here
In England hath she thousands yet. She
hath struck

Her curse out with pontific finger at me,
Cursed me down and away to the bottom-
less pit.

Her shadow like the shadow of clouds or sails,
The shadow of that huge event at hand,
Darkens the seas already, and the wind
Is on my cheek that shakes my kingdom down.
She hath thousands here in England, born
and bred

Englishmen. They will stand by Rome!"

" 'Fore God,"

Cried Walsingham, " my Queen, you do them
wrong!

There is another Rome—not this that lurks
And lies and plucks the world back into
darkness

And stabs it there for gold. There is a City

Whose eyes are tow'rd the morning; on
whose heights

Blazes the Cross of Christ above the world;
A Rome that shall wage warfare yet for God
In the dark days to come, a Rome whose
thought

Shall march with our humanity and be proud
To cast old creeds like seed into the ground,
Watch the strange shoots and foster the new
flower

Of faiths we know not yet. Is this a dream?
I speak as one by knighthood bound to
speak;

For even this day—and my heart burns
with it—

I heard the Catholic gentlemen of England
Speaking in grave assembly. At one breath
Of peril to our island, why, their swords
Leapt from their scabbards, and their cry
went up

To split the heavens—*God save our English
Queen !*”

Even as he spake there passed the rushing
gleam

Of torches once again, and as they stood
Silently listening, all the winds ran wild
With clamouring bells, and a great cry
went up—

God save Elizabeth, our English Queen !

“I’ll vouch for some two hundred Catholic
throats

Among that thousand,” whispered Walsingham
Eagerly, with his eyes on the Queen’s face.
Then, seeing it brighten, fervently he cried,
Pressing the swift advantage home, “O,
Madam,

The heart of England now is all on fire !
We are one people, as we never have been
In all our history, all prepared to die

Around your throne. Madam, you are beloved
As never yet was English king or queen!"

She looked at him, the tears in her keen eyes
Glittered—"And I am very proud," she said,
"But if our enemies command the world,
And we have one small island and no
more . . ."

She ceased; and Drake, in a strange voice,
hoarse and low,

Trembling with passion deeper than all speech,
Cried out—"No more than the great ocean-sea
Which makes the enemies' coast our frontier
now;

No more than that great Empire of the deep
Which rolls from Pole to Pole, washing the
world

With thunder, that great Empire whose
command

This day is yours to take. Hear me, my
Queen,

This is a dream, a new dream, but a true;
For mightier days are dawning on the world
Than heart of man hath known. If England
hold

The sea, she holds the hundred thousand
gates

That open to futurity. She holds
The highway of all ages. Argosies
Of unknown glory set their sails this day
For England out of ports beyond the stars.
Ay, on the sacred seas we ne'er shall know
They hoist their sails this day by peaceful
quays,

Great gleaming wharves i' the perfect City
of God,

If she but claim her heritage."

He ceased;

And the deep dream of that new realm,
the sea,

Through all the soul of Gloriana surged

A moment, then with splendid eyes that filled
With fire of sunsets far away, she cried
(Faith making her a child, yet queenlier still)
“Yea, claim it thou for me!”

A moment there
Trembling she stood. Then, once again,
there passed
A rush of torches through the gloom without,
And a great cry “*God save Elizabeth,*
God save our English Queen!”

“Yea go, then, go,”
She said, “God speed you now, Sir Francis
Drake,
Not as a privateer, but with full powers,
My Admiral-at-the-Seas!”

Without a word
Drake bent above her hand and, ere she
knew it,
His eyes from the dark doorway flashed
farewell

And he was gone. But ere he leapt to saddle
Walsingham stood at his stirrup, muttering

“ Ride,

Ride now like hell to Plymouth ; for the Queen
Is hard beset, and ere ye are out at sea
Her mood will change. The friends of Spain
will move

Earth and the heavens for your recall.

They'll tempt her

With their false baits of peace, though I
shall stand

Here at your back through thick and thin,
farewell ! ”

Fire flashed beneath the hoofs and Drake
was gone.

Scarce had he vanished in the night than
doubt

Once more assailed the Queen. The death
of Mary

Had brought e'en France against her.
Walsingham,
And Burleigh himself, prime mover of that
death,
Being held in much disfavour for it, stood
As helpless. Long ere Drake or human
power,
They thought, could put to sea, a courier
sped
To Plymouth bidding Drake forbear to strike
At Spain, but keep to the high seas, and lo,
The roadstead glittered empty. Drake was
gone!

Gone! Though the friends of Spain had
poured their gold
To thin his ranks, and every hour his crews
Deserted, he had laughed—"Let Spain buy
scum!
Next to an honest seaman I love best

An honest landsman. What more goodly task
Than teaching brave men seamanship?" He

had filled

His ships with soldiers! Out in the teeth
of the gale

That raged against him he had driven. In
vain,

Amid the boisterous laughter of the quays,
A pinnace dashed in hot pursuit and met
A roaring breaker and came hurtling back
With oars and spars all trailing in the foam,
A tangled mass of wreckage and despair.
Sky swept to stormy sky: no sail could live
In that great yeast of waves; but Drake
was gone!

Then, once again, across the rolling sea
Great rumours rushed of how he had sacked
the port
Of Cadiz and had swept along the coast

To Lisbon, where the whole Armada lay,
Had snapped up prizes under its very nose,
And taunted Santa Cruz, High Admiral
Of Spain, striving to draw him out for fight,
And offering, if his course should lie that
way,

To convoy him to Britain, taunted him
So bitterly that for once, in the world's eyes,
A jest had power to kill; for Santa Cruz
Died with the spleen of it, since he could
not move

Before the appointed season. Then there
came

Flying back home, the Queen's old Admiral
Borough, deserting Drake and all aghast
At Drake's temerity: "For," he said, "this
man,

Thrust o'er my head, against all precedent,
Bade me follow him into harbour mouths
A-flame with cannon like the jaws of death,

Whereat I much demurred; and straightway
Drake

Clapped me in irons, me—an officer
And Admiral of the Queen; and, though my
voice

Was all against it, plunged into the pit
Without me, left me with some word that
burns

And rankles in me still, making me fear
The man was mad, some word of lonely
seas,

A desert island and a mutineer
And dead Magellan's gallows. Sirs, my life
Was hardly safe with him. Why, he resolved
To storm the Castle of St Vincent, sirs,
A castle on a cliff, grinning with guns,
Well-known impregnable! The Spaniards
fear

Drake; but to see him land below it and
bid

Surrender, sirs, the strongest fort of Spain
Without a blow, they laughed! And straight-
way he,
With all the fury of Satan, turned that cliff
To hell itself. He sent down to the ships
For faggots, broken oars, beams, bowsprits,
masts,
And piled them up against the outer gates,
Higher and higher, and fired them. There
he stood
Amid the smoke and flame and cannon-shot,
This Admiral, like a common seaman, black
With soot, besmeared with blood, his naked
arms
Full of great faggots, labouring like a giant
And roaring like Apollyon. Sirs, he is mad!
But did he take it, say you? Yea, he
took it,
The mightiest stronghold on the coast of
Spain,

Took it and tumbled all its big brass guns
Clattering over the cliffs into the sea.
But, sirs, ye need not raise a cheer so loud!
It is not warfare. 'Twas a madman's trick,
A devil's!"

Then the rumour of a storm
That scattered the fleet of Drake to the four
winds

Disturbed the heart of England, as his ships
Came straggling into harbour, one by one,
Saying they could not find him. Then, at
last,

When the storm burst in its earth-shaking
might

Along our coasts, one night of rolling gloom
His cannon woke old Plymouth. In he
came

Across the thunder and lightning of the sea
With his grim ship of war and, close behind,
A shadow like a mountain or a cloud

Torn from the heaven-high panoplies of
Spain,
A captured galleon loomed, and round her
prow
A blazoned scroll, whence (as she neared
the quays
Which many a lanthorn swung from brawny
fist
Yellowed) the sudden crimson of her name
San Philippe flashed o'er the white sea of
faces,
And a rending shout went skyward that out-
roared
The blanching breakers—" 'Tis the heart of
Spain!
The great *San Philippe!*" Overhead she
towered,
The mightiest ship afloat; and in her hold
The riches of a continent, a prize
Greater than earth had ever known; for there

Not only ruby and pearl like ocean-beaches
Heaped on some wizard coast in that dim
hull

Blazed to the lanthorn-light; not only gold
Gleamed, though of gold a million would
not buy

Her store; but in her cabin lay the charts
And secrets of the wild unwhispered wealth
Of India, secrets that splashed London
wharves

With coloured dreams and made her misty
streets

Flame like an Eastern City when the sun
Shatters itself on jewelled domes and spills
Its crimson wreckage thro' the silvery
palms.

And of those dreams the far East India
quest

Began: the first foundation-stone was laid
Of our great Indian Empire, and a star

Began to tremble on the brows of England
That Time can never darken.

But now the seas
Darkened indeed with menace; now at last
The cold wind of the black approaching
wings
Of Azrael crept across the deep: the storm
Throbbled with their thunderous pulse, and
ere that moon
Waned, a swift gunboat foamed into the Sound
With word that all the Invincible Armada
Was hoisting sail for England.

Even now,
Elizabeth, torn a thousand ways, withheld
The word for which Drake pleaded as for life,
That he might meet them ere they left their
coasts,
Meet them or ever they reached the Channel,
meet them

Now, or—"Too late! too late!" At last his
voice

Beat down e'en those that blindly dinned
her ears

With chatter of meeting Spain on British
soil;

And swiftly she commanded (seeing once more
The light that burned amid the approaching
gloom

In Drake's deep eyes) Lord Howard of
Effingham,

High Admiral of England, straight to join him
At Plymouth Sound. "How many ships are
wanted?"

She asked him, thinking "we are few,
indeed!"

"Give me but sixteen merchantmen," he said,
"And but four battleships, by the mercy of
God,

I'll answer for the Armada!" Out to sea

They swept, in the teeth of a gale; but
vainly Drake

Strove to impart the thought wherewith his
mind

Travailed—to win command of the ocean-sea
By bursting on the fleets of Spain at once
Even as they left their ports, not as of old
To hover in a vain dream of defence
Round fifty threatened points of British coast,
But Howard, clinging to his old-world order,
Flung out his ships in a loose, long, strag-
gling line

Across the Channel, waiting, wary, alert,
But powerless thus as a string of scattered
sea-gulls

Beating against the storm. Then, flying to
meet them,

A merchantman brought terror down the wind,
With news that she had seen that monstrous
host

Stretching from sky to sky, great hulks of
doom,

Dragging death's midnight with them o'er
the sea

Tow'rds England. Up to Howard's flag-ship
Drake

In his immortal battle-ship—*Revenge*,
Rushed thro' the foam, and thro' the swirl-
ing seas

His pinnacle dashed alongside. On to the
decks

O' the tossing flag-ship, like a very Viking
Shaking the surf and rainbows of the spray
From sun-smit lion-like mane and beard he
stood

Before Lord Howard in the escutcheoned
poop

And poured his heart out like the rending sea
In passionate wave on wave:

“If yonder fleet

Once reach the Channel, hardly the mercy
of God

Saves England! I would pray with my last
breath,

Let us beat up to windward of them now,
And handle them before they reach the
Channel."

"Nay; but we cannot bare the coast," cried
Howard,

"Nor have we stores of powder or food
enough!"

"My lord," said Drake, with his great arm
outstretched,

"There is food enough in yonder enemy's
ships,

And powder enough and cannon-shot enough!
We must re-victual there. Look! look!" he
cried,

And pointed to the heavens. As for a soul
That by sheer force of will compels the world

To work his bidding, so it seemed the wind
That blew against them slowly veered. The
sails

Quivered, the skies revolved. A northerly
breeze

Awoke and now, behind the British ships,
Blew steadily tow'rds the unseen host of
Spain.

"It is the breath of God," cried Drake,
"they lie

Wind-bound, and we may work our will
with them.

Signal the word, Lord Howard, and drive
down!"

And as a man convinced by heaven itself
Lord Howard ordered, straightway, the whole
fleet

To advance.

And now, indeed, as Drake foresaw,
The Armada lay, beyond the dim horizon,

Wind-bound and helpless in Corunna bay,
At England's mercy, could her fleet but draw
Nigh enough, with its fire-ships and great guns
To windward. Nearer, nearer league by league
The ships of England came; till Ushant lay
Some seventy leagues behind. Then, yet once
more

The wind veered, straight against them. To
remain

Beating against it idly was to starve:
And, as a man whose power upon the world
Fails for one moment of exhausted will,
Drake, gathering up his forces as he went
For one more supreme effort, turned his ship
Tow'rds Plymouth, and retreated with the
rest.

There, while the ships refitted with all haste
And axe and hammer rang, one golden eve
Just as the setting sun began to fringe

The clouds with crimson, and the creaming
waves

Were one wild riot of fairy rainbows, Drake
Stood with old comrades on the close-cropped
green

Of Plymouth Hoe, playing a game of bowls.
Far off unseen, a little barque, full-sail,
Struggled and leapt and strove tow'rds Ply-
mouth Sound,

Noteless as any speckled herring-gull
Flickering between the white flakes of the
waves.

A group of schoolboys with their satchels lay
Stretched on the green, gazing with great
wide eyes

Upon their seamen heroes, as like gods
Disporting with the battles of the world
They loomed, tossing black bowls like cannon-
balls

Against the rosy West, or lounged at ease

With faces olive-dark against that sky
Laughing, while from the neighbouring inn
mine host,
White-aproned and blue-jerkined, hurried out
With foaming cups of sack, and they drank
deep,
Tossing their heads back under the golden
clouds
And burying their bearded lips. The hues
That slashed their doublets, for the boys'
bright eyes
(Even as the gleams of Grecian cloud or
moon
Revealed the old gods) were here rich dusky
streaks
Of splendour from the Spanish Main, that
shone
But to proclaim these heroes. There a boy
More bold crept nearer to a slouched hat
thrown

Upon the green, and touched the silver plume,
And felt as if he had touched a sunset-isle
Of feathery palms beyond a crimson sea.

Another stared at the blue rings of smoke
A storm-scarred seaman puffed from a long
pipe

Primed with the strange new herb they had
lately found

In far Virginia. But the little ship
Now plunging into Plymouth Bay none saw.
E'en when she had anchored and her strain-
ing boat

Had touched the land, and the boat's crew
over the quays

Leapt with a shout, scarce was there one to
heed.

A seaman, smiling, swaggered out of the inn
Swinging in one brown hand a gleaming cage
Wherein a big green parrot chattered and
clung

Fluttering against the wires. A troop of girls
With arms linked paused to watch the game
of bowls;

And now they flocked around the cage, while
one

With rosy finger tempted the horny beak
To bite. Close overhead a sea-mew flashed
Seaward. Once, from an open window, soft
Through trellised leaves, not far away, a
voice

Floated, a voice that flushed the cheek of
Drake,

The voice of Bess, bending her glossy head
Over the broidery frame, in a quiet song.

The song ceased. Still, with rainbows in
their eyes,

The schoolboys watched the bowls like
cannon-balls

Roll from the hand of gods along the turf.

Suddenly, tow'rds the green, a little cloud
Of seamen, shouting, stumbling, as they ran
Drew all eyes on them. The game ceased.

A voice

Rough with the storms of many an ocean
roared,

“Drake! Cap'en Drake! The Armada!
They are in the Channel! We sighted them—
A line of battle-ships! We could not see
An end of them. They stretch from east to
west

Like a great storm of clouds, glinting with
guns,

From sky to sky!”

So, after all his strife,
The wasted weeks had tripped him, the
fierce hours

Of pleading for the sea's command, great
hours

And golden moments, all were lost. The fleet

Of Spain had won the Channel without a
blow.

All eyes were turned on Drake, as he stood
there

A giant against the sunset and the sea
Looming, alone. Far off, the first white star
Gleamed in a rosy space of heaven. He
tossed

A grim black ball i' the lustrous air and
laughed,—

“Come, lads,” he said, “we’ve time to finish
the game!”

BOOK XI.

FEW minutes, and well wasted those, were
spent

On that great game of bowls; for well knew
Drake

What panic threatened Plymouth, since his
fleet

Lay trapped there by the black head-wind
that blew

Straight up the Sound, and Plymouth town
itself,

Except the ships won seaward ere the dawn,
Lay at the Armada's mercy. Never a sea-
man

Of all the sea-dogs clustered on the quays,

And all the captains clamouring round Lord
Howard,
Hoped that one ship might win to the open
sea :
At dawn, they thought, the Armada's rolling
guns
To windward, in an hour, must shatter them,
Huddled in their red slaughter-house like
sheep.

Now was the great sun sunken and the night
Dark. Far to Westward, like the soul of man
Fighting blind nature, a wild flare of red
Upon some windy headland suddenly leapt
And vanished flickering into the clouds.
Again
It leapt and vanished: then all at once it
streamed
Steadily as a crimson torch upheld
By Titan hands to Heaven. It was the first

Beacon! A sudden silence swept along
The seething quays, and in their midst ap-
peared

Drake.

Then the jubilant thunder of his voice
Rolled, buffeting the sea-wind far and nigh,
And ere they knew what power as of a sea
Surged through them, his immortal battle-ship
Revenge had flung out cables to the quays,
And while the seamen, as he had commanded,
Knotted thick ropes together, he stood apart
(For well he knew what panic threatened still)
Whittling idly at a scrap of wood,
And carved a little boat out for the child
Of some old sea-companion.
So great and calm a master of the world
Seemed Drake that, as he whittled, and the
chips
Fluttered into the blackness over the quay,
Men said that in this hour of England's need

Each tiny flake turned to a battle-ship;
For now began the lanthorns, one by one,
To glitter, and half-reveal the shadowy hulks
Before him.—So the huge old legend grew,
Not all unworthy the Homeric age
Of gods and god-like men.

St Michael's Mount,
Answering the first wild beacon far away,
Rolled crimson thunders to the stormy sky!
The ropes were knotted. Through the pant-
ing dark

Great heaving lines of seamen all together
Hauled with a shout, and all together again
Hauled with a shout against the roaring wind;
And slowly, slowly, onward tow'rds the sea
Moved the *Revenge*, and seaward ever heaved
The brawny backs together, and in their
midst,

Suddenly, as they slackened, Drake was there
Hauling like any ten, and with his heart

Doubling the strength of all, giving them joy
Of battle against those odds,—Ay, till they
found

Delight i' the burning tingle of the blood
That even their hardy hands must feel besmear
The harsh, rough, straining ropes. There as
they toiled,

Answering a score of hills, old Beachy Head
Streamed like a furnace to the rolling clouds.
Then all around the coast each windy ness
And craggy mountain kindled. Peak from
peak

Caught the tremendous fire, and passed it on
Round the bluff East and the black mouth
of Thames,—

Ay, Northward to the waste wild Yorkshire
fells

And gloomy Cumberland, where, like a giant,
Great Skiddaw grasped the red tempestuous
brand,

And thrust it up against the reeling heavens.
Then all night long, inland, the wandering
winds
Ran wild with clamour and clash of startled
bells;
All night the cities seethed with torches,
flashed
With twenty thousand flames of burnished
steel;
While over the trample and thunder of
hooves blazed forth
The lightning of wild trumpets. Lonely lanes
Of country darkness, lit by cottage doors
Entwined with rose and honeysuckle, roared
Like mountain-torrents now—East, West, and
South,
As to the coasts with pike and musket
streamed
The trained bands, horse and foot, from
every town

And every hamlet. All the shaggy hills
From Milford Haven to the Downs of Kent,
And up to Humber, gleamed with many a
hedge

Of pikes between the beacon's crimson glares;
While in red London forty thousand men,
In case the Invader should prevail, drew
swords

Around their Queen. All night in dark St
Paul's,

While round it rolled a multitudinous roar
As of the Atlantic on a Western beach,
And all the leaning London streets were lit
With fury of torches, rose the passionate
prayer

Of England's peril:

*O Lord God of Hosts,
Let Thine enemies know that Thou hast taken
England into Thine hands!*

The mighty sound

Rolled, billowing round the kneeling aisles,
then died,

Echoing up the heights. A voice, far off,
As on the cross of Calvary, caught it up
And poured the prayer o'er that deep hush,
alone :

*We beseech thee, O God, to go before our armies,
Bless and prosper them both by land and sea !
Grant unto them Thy victory, O God,
As thou usedst to do to Thy children when they
please Thee !*

*All power, all strength, all victory come from
Thee !*

Then from the lips of all those thousands
burst

A sound as from the rent heart of an ocean,
One tumult, one great rushing storm of
wings

Cleaving the darkness round the Gates of
Heaven :

*Some put their trust in chariots and some in
horses ;*

*But we will remember Thy name, O Lord,
our God !*

So, while at Plymouth Sound her seamen
toiled

All through the night, and scarce a ship
had won

Seaward, the heart of England cried to God.
All night, while trumpets yelled and blared
without,

And signal cannon shook the blazoned panes,
And billowing multitudes went thundering by,
Amid that solemn pillared hush arose
From lips of kneeling thousands one great
prayer

Storming the Gates of Heaven! O Lord,
our God,

Heavenly Father, have mercy upon our Queen,

*To whom Thy far disperséd flock do fly
In the anguish of their souls. Behold, behold,
How many princes band themselves against her,
How long Thy servant hath laboured to them
for peace,*

*How proudly they prepare themselves for battle !
Arise, therefore ! Maintain Thine own cause,
Judge Thou between her and her enemies !
She seeketh not her own honour, but Thine,
Not the dominions of others, but Thy truth,
Not bloodshed but the saving of the afflicted !
O rend the heavens, therefore, and come down,
Deliver Thy people !*

*To vanquish is all one with Thee, by few
Or many, want or wealth, weakness or strength.
The cause is Thine, the enemies Thine, the
afflicted*

*Thine ! The honour, victory, and triumph
Thine ! Grant her people now one heart, one
mind,*

*One strength. Give unto her councils and her
captains*

*Wisdom and courage strongly to withstand
The forces of her enemies, that the fame
And glory of Thy Kingdom may be spread
Unto the ends of the world. Father, we crave
This in Thy mercy, for the precious death
Of Thy dear Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ!
Amen.*

And as the dreadful dawn thro' mist-wreaths
broke,

And out of Plymouth Sound at last, with
cheers

Ringin' from many a thousand throats, there
struggled

Six little ships, all that the night's long
toil

Had warped down to the sea (but leading
them

The ship of Drake) there rose one ocean-cry

From all those worshippers—*Let God arise,*
And let His enemies be scattered!

Under the leaden fogs of that new dawn,
Empty and cold, indifferent as death,
The sea heaved strangely to the seamen's
 eyes,
Seeing all round them only the leaden surge
Wrapped in wet mists or flashing here and
 there
With crumbling white. Against the cold
 wet wind
Westward the little ships of England beat
With short tacks, close inshore, striving
 to win
The windward station of the threatening battle
That neared behind the veil. Six little ships,
No more, beat Westward, even as all man-
 kind
Beats up against that universal wind

Whereon like withered leaves all else is
blown

Down one wide way to death: the soul
alone,

Whether at last it wins, or faints and fails,
Stems the dark tide with its intrepid sails.

Close-hauled, with many a short tack,
struggled and strained,

North - west, South - west, the ships; but
ever Westward gained

Some little way with every tack; and soon,
While the prows plunged beneath the grey-
gold noon,

Lapped by the crackling waves, even as the
wind

Died down a little, in the mists behind
Stole out from Plymouth Sound the struggling
score

Of ships that might not win last night
to sea.

They followed; but the Six went on before,
Not knowing, alone, for God and Liberty.

Now, as they tacked North-west, the sullen
roar

Of reefs crept out, or some strange bleat-
ing sound

Of sheep upon the hills. South-west once
more

The bo'sun's whistle swung their bowsprits
round;

South-west until the long low lapping splash
Was all they heard, of keels that still
ran out

Seaward, then with one muffled heave and
crash

Once more the whistles brought their sails
about.

And now the noon began to wane; the
West

With slow rich colours filled and shadowy
forms,
Dark curdling wreaths and fogs with crim-
soned breast,
And tangled zones of dusk like frozen
storms,

Motionless, flagged with sunset, hulled with
doom!

Motionless? Nay, across the darkening
deep
Surely the whole sky moved its gorgeous
gloom
Onward; and like the curtains of a sleep

The red fogs crumbled, mists dissolved away!
There, like death's secret dawning thro' a
dream,

Great thrones of thunder dusk'd the dying
day,
And, higher, pale towers of cloud began
to gleam.

There, in one heaven-wide storm, great masts
and clouds
Of sail crept slowly forth, the ships of
Spain!
From North to South, their tangled spars
and shrouds
Controlled the slow wind as with bit and
rein ;
Onward they rode in insolent disdain
Sighting the little fleet of England there,
While o'er the sullen splendour of the main
Three solemn guns tolled all their host to
prayer,
And their great ensign blazoned all the
doom-fraught air.

The sacred standard of their proud crusade
Up to the mast-head of their flag-ship
soared :

On one side knelt the Holy Mother-maid,
On one the crucified Redeemer poured
His blood, and all their kneeling hosts adored
Their saints, and clouds of incense heaven-
ward streamed,

While pomp of cannonry and pike and sword
Down long sea-lanes of mocking menace
gleamed,

And chant of priests rolled out o'er seas that
darkly dreamed.

Who comes to fight for England? Is it ye,
Six little straws that dance upon the foam?
Ay, sweeping o'er the sunset-crimsoned sea
Let the proud pageant in its glory come,
Leaving the sunset like a hecatomb
Of souls whose bodies yet endure the chain!

Let slaves, by thousands, branded, scarred
and dumb,

In those dark galleys grip their oars again,
And o'er the rolling deep bring on the pomp
of Spain ;—

Bring on the pomp of royal paladins
(For all the pryncedoms of the land are
there !)

And for the gorgeous purple of their sins
The papal pomp bring on with psalm and
prayer :

Nearer the splendour heaves ; can ye not hear
The rushing foam, not see the blazoned arms,
And black-faced hosts thro' leagues of golden
air

Crowding the decks, muttering their beads
and charms

To where, in furthest heaven, they thicken
like locust-swarms ?

Bring on the pomp and pride of old Castille,
Blazon the skies with royal Aragon,
Beneath Oquendo let old ocean reel,
The purple pomp of priestly Rome bring
on ;
And let her censers dusk the dying sun,
The thunder of her banners on the breeze
Following Sidonia's glorious galleon
Deride the sleeping thunder of the seas,
While twenty thousand warriors chant her
litanies.

Lo, all their decks are kneeling! Sky to
sky

Responds! It is their solemn evening hour.
SALVE REGINA, though the daylight die,

SALVE REGINA, though the darkness lour ;
Have they not still the kingdom and the
power ?

SALVE REGINA, hark, their thousands cry,

From where like clouds to where like moun-
tains tower

Their crowded galleons looming far or nigh,
SALVE REGINA, hark, what distant seas reply!

What distant seas, what distant ages hear?

Bring on the pomp! the sun of Spain goes
down:

The moon but swells the tide of praise and
prayer;

Bring on the world-wide pomp of her
renown;

Let darkness crown her with a starrier crown,
And let her watch the fierce waves crouch
and fawn

Round those huge hulks from which her
cannon frown,

While close inshore the wet sea-mists are
drawn

Round England's Drake: then wait, in
triumph, for the dawn.

The sun of Rome goes down; the night is
dark!

Still are her thousands praying, still their
cry

Ascends from the wide waste of waters, hark!

AVE MARIA, darker grows the sky!

AVE MARIA, *those about to die*

Salute thee! Nay, what wandering winds
blaspheme

With random gusts of chilling prophecy

Against the solemn sounds that heaven-
ward stream!

The night is come at last. Break not the
splendid dream.

But through the misty darkness, close inshore,
North-west, South-west, and ever Westward
strained

The little ships of England, all night long,
As down the coast the reddening beacons
leapt,

The crackle and lapping splash of tacking
keels,

The bo'suns low sharp whistles and the
whine

Of ropes, mixing with many a sea-bird's cry
Disturbed the darkness, waking vague swift
fears

Among the mighty hulks of Spain that lay
Nearest, then fading through the mists inshore
North-west, then growing again, but farther
down

Their ranks to Westward with each dark
return

And dark departure, till the rearmost rank
Of grim sea-castles heard the swish and
creak

Pass plashing seaward thro' the wet sea-
mists

To windward now of all that monstrous host,
Then heard no more than wandering sea-
birds' cries

Wheeling around their leagues of lanthorn-
light,
Or heave of waters, waiting for the dawn.

Dawn, everlasting and almighty dawn
Rolled o'er the waters, the grey mists
were fled:

See, in their reeking heaven-wide crescent
drawn

Those masts and spars and cloudy sails,
outspread

Like one great sulphurous tempest soaked
with red,

In vain withstand the march of brightening
skies:

The dawn sweeps onward and the night is
dead,

And lo, to windward, what bright menace
lies,

What glory kindles now in England's waken-
ing eyes?

There, on the glittering plains of open sea,
To windward now, behind the fleets of
Spain,

Two little files of ships are tossing free,
Free of the winds and of the wind-swept
main :

Were they not trapped? Who brought them
forth again,

Free of the great new fields of England's
war,

With sails like blossoms shining after rain,
And guns that sparkle to the morning
star?

Drake!—first upon the deep that rolls to
Trafalgar!

And Spain knows well that flag of fiery
fame,

Spain knows who leads those files across
the sea;

Implacable, invincible, his name

El Draque, creeps hissing through her ranks
to lee ;

But now she holds the rolling heavens in fee,

His ships are few. *They surge across the
foam,*

The hunt is up ! But need the mountains
flee

Or fear the snarling wolf-pack ? Let them
come !

They crouch, but dare not leap upon the
flanks of Rome.

Nearer they come and nearer ! Nay, pre-
pare !

Close your huge ranks that sweep from
sky to sky !

Madness itself would shrink ; but Drake will
dare

Eternal hell ! Let the great signal fly—

Close up your ranks ; El Draque comes down
to die !

El Draque is brave ! The vast sea-cities
loom

Thro' heaven : Spain spares one smile of
chivalry,

One wintry smile across her cannons' gloom
As that frail fleet full-sail comes rushing
tow'rds its doom.

Suddenly, as the wild change of a dream,
Even as the Spaniards watched those lean
sharp prows

Leap straight at their huge hulks, watched
well content,

Knowing their foes, once grappled, must be
doomed ;

Even as they caught the rush and hiss of
foam

Across that narrow, dwindling gleam of sea,

And heard, abruptly close, the sharp com-
mands
And steady British answers, caught one
glimpse
Of bare-armed seamen waiting by their
guns,
The vision changed! The ships of England
swerved
Swiftly—a volley of flame and thunder swept
Blinding the buffeted air, a volley of iron
From four sheer broadsides, crashing thro' a
hulk
Of Spain. She reeled, blind in the fiery
surge
And fury of that assault. So swift it seemed
That as she heeled to leeward, ere her guns
Trained on the foe once more, the sulphurous
cloud
That wrapped the sea, once, twice, and
thrice again

Split with red thunder-claps that rent and
raked

Her huge beams through and through. Ay,
as she heeled

To leeward still, her own grim cannon
belched

Their lava skyward, wounding the void air,
And, as by miracle, the ships of Drake
Were gone. Along the Spanish rear they
swept

From North to South, raking them as they
went

At close range, hardly a pistol-shot away,
With volley on volley. Never Spain had
seen

Seamen or marksmen like to these who
sailed

Two knots against her one. They came and
went,

Suddenly neared or sheered away at will

As if by magic, pouring flame and iron
In four full broadsides thro' some Spanish
hulk

Ere one of hers burst blindly at the sky.
Southward, along the Spanish rear they
swept,

Then swung about, and volleying sheets of
flame,

Iron, and death, along the same fierce road
Littered with spars, reeking with sulphurous
fumes,

Returned, triumphantly rushing, all their
sails

Alow, aloft, full-bellied with the wind.

Then, then, from sky to sky, one mighty
surge

Of baleful pride, huge wrath, stormy dis-
dain,

With shuddering clouds and towers of sail
would urge

Onward the heaving citadels of Spain,
Which dragged earth's thunders o'er the
groaning main,

And held the panoplies of faith in fee,
Beating against the wind, struggling in
vain

To close with that swift ocean-cavalry:
Spain had all earth in charge! Had Eng-
land, then, the sea?

Spain had the mountains—mountains flow
like clouds!

Spain had great kingdoms—kingdoms melt
away!

Yet, in that crescent, army on army
crowds,

How shall she fear what seas or winds
can say?—

The seas that leap and shine round earth's
decay,
The winds that mount and sing while
empires fall,
And mountains pass like waves in the wind's
way,
And dying gods thro' shuddering twilights
call ;
Had England, then, the sea that sweeps o'er
one and all ?

See, in gigantic wrath the *Rata* hurls
Her mighty prows round to the wild sea-
wind :
The deep like one black maelstrom round
her swirls
While great Recaldé follows hard behind :
Reeling, like Titans, thunder-blasted, blind,
They strive to cross the ships of England
—yea,

Challenge them to the grapple, and only
find

Red broadsides bursting o'er the bursting
spray,

And England surging still along her wind-
ward way!

To windward still *Revenge* and *Raleigh* flash
And thunder, and the sea flames red
between:

In vain against the wind the galleons crash
And plunge and pour blind volleys thro'
the screen

Of rolling sulphurous clouds at dimly seen
Topsails that, to and fro, like sea-birds fly!
Ever to leeward the great hulks careen;
Their thousand cannon can but wound the
sky,

While England's little *Rainbow* foams and
flashes by.

Suddenly the flag-ship of Recaldé, stung
To fury it seemed, heeled like an avalanche
To leeward, then reeled out beyond the rest
Against the wind, alone, daring the foe
To grapple her. At once the little *Revenge*
With Drake's flag flying flashed at her throat,
And hardly a cable's-length away out-belched
Broadside on broadside, under those great
cannon,

Crashing through five-foot beams, four shots
to one,

While Howard and the rest swept to and fro
Keeping at deadly bay the rolling hulks
That looming like Leviathans now plunged
Desperately against the freshening wind
To rescue the great flag-ship where she lay
Alone, amid the cannonades of Drake,
Alone, like a volcanic island lashed
With crimson hurricanes, dinning the winds
With isolated thunders, flaking the skies

With wrathful lava, while great spars and
blocks

Leapt through the cloudy glare and fell, far off,
Like small black stones into the hissing sea.

Oquendo saw her peril far away!

His rushing prow thro' heaven begins to
loom,

Oquendo, first in all that proud array,

Hath heart the pride of Spain to reassume:
He comes; the rolling seas are dusked with
gloom

Of his great sails! Now round him once
again,

Thrust out your oars, ye mighty hulks of
doom;

Forward, with hiss of whip and clank of
chain!

Let twice ten hundred slaves bring on the
wrath of Spain!

Sidonia comes! Toledo comes!—huge ranks
That rally against the storm from sky to
sky,

As down the dark blood-rusted chain-locked
planks

Of labouring galleys the dark slave-guards
ply

Their knotted scourges, and the red flakes fly
From bare scarred backs that quiver and
heave once more,

And slaves that heed not if they live or die
Pull with numb arms at many a red-
stained oar,

Nor know the sea's dull crash from cannon's
growing roar.

Bring on the wrath! From heaven to rush-
ing heaven

The white foam sweeps around their fierce
array;

In vain before their shattering crimson levin
The ships of England flash and dart
away:

Not England's heart can hold that host at
bay!

See, a swift signal shoots along her line,
Her ships are scattered, they fly, they fly
like spray

Driven against the wind by wrath divine,
While, round Recaldé now, Sidonia's cannon
shine.

The wild sea-winds with golden trumpets
blaze!

One wave will wash away the crimson
stain

That blots Recaldé's decks. Her first amaze
Is over: down the Channel once again
Turns the triumphant pageantry of Spain
In battle-order, now. Behind her, far,

While the broad sun sinks to the Western
main,

Glitter the little ships of England's war,
And over them in heaven glides out the first
white star.

The sun goes down: the heart of Spain is
proud:

Her censers fume, her golden trumpets blow!
Into the darkening East with cloud on cloud
Of broad-flung sail her huge sea-castles go:
Rich under blazoned poops like rose-flushed
snow

Tosses the foam. Far off the sunset
gleams:

Her banners like a thousand sunsets glow,
As down the darkening East the pageant
streams,

Full-fraught with doom for England, rigged
with princely dreams.

Nay, "rigged with curses dark," as o'er the
waves

Drake watched them slowly sweeping into
the gloom

That thickened down the Channel, watched
them go

In ranks compact, roundels impregnable,
With Biscay's bristling broad-beamed squad-
ron drawn

Behind for rear-guard. As the sun went
down

Drake flew the council-flag. Across the sea
That gleamed still like a myriad-petalled rose
Up to the little *Revenge* the pinnaces foamed.
There, on Drake's powder-grimed escutcheoned
poop

They gathered, Admirals and great flag-
captains,

Hawkins, Frobisher, shining names and
famous,

And some content to serve and follow and
fight

Where duty called unknown, but heroes all.
High on the poop they clustered, gazing East
With faces dark as iron against the flame
Of sunset, eagle-faces, iron lips,
And keen eyes fiercely flashing as they turned
Like sword-flames now, or dark and deep as
night

Watching the vast Armada slowly mix
Its broad-flung sails with twilight where it
dragged
Thro' thickening heavens its curdled storm
of clouds

Down the wide darkening Channel.

“My Lord Howard,”

Said Drake, “it seems we have but scarred
the skins

Of those huge hulks: the hour grows late
for England.

'Twere well to handle them again at once."

A growl

Of fierce approval answered; but Lord
Howard

Cried out, "Attack we cannot, save at risk
Of our whole fleet. It is not death I fear,
But England's peril. We have fought
all day,

Accomplished nothing! Half our powder is
spent!

I think it best to hang upon their flanks
Till we be reinforced!"

"My lord," said Drake,

"Had we that week to spare for which
I prayed,

And were we handling them in Spanish seas,
We might delay. There is no choosing
now.

Yon hulks of doom are steadfastly resolved
On one tremendous path and solid end—

To join their powers with Parma's thirty
thousand

(Not heeding our light horsemen of the sea),
Then in one earthquake of o'erwhelming arms
Roll Europe over England. They've not
grasped

The first poor thought which now and
evermore

Must be the sceptre of Britain, the steel
trident

Of ocean-sovereignty. That mighty fleet
Invincible, impregnable, omnipotent,
Must here and now be 'shattered, never be
joined

With Parma, never abase the wind-swept sea,
With oaken roads for thundering legions
To trample in the splendour of the sun
From Europe to our island.

As for food,
In yonder enemy's fleet there is food enough

To feed a nation; ay, and powder enough
To split an empire. I will answer for it
Ye shall not lack of either, nor for shot,
Not though ye pluck them out of your own
beams

To feed your hungry cannon. Cast your
bread

Upon the waters. Think not of the Queen!
She will not send it! For she hath not
known

(How could she know) this wide new realm
of hers,

When we ourselves—her seamen—scarce have
learnt

What means this kingdom of the ocean-sea
To England and her throne—food, life-
blood, life!

She could not understand who, when our ships
Put out from Plymouth, hardly gave them
store

Of powder and shot to last three fighting
days,

Or rations even for those. Blame not the
Queen,

Who hath striven for England as no king
hath fought

Since England was a nation. Bear with me,
For I must pour my heart before you now
This one last time. Yon fishing-boats have
brought

Tidings how on this very day she rode

Before her mustered pikes at Tilbury.

Methinks I see her riding down their lines
High on her milk-white Barbary charger,
hear

Her voice—‘My people, though my flesh be
woman,

My heart is of your kingly lion’s breed :

I come myself to lead you!’ I see the sun
Shining upon her armour, hear the voice

Of all her armies roaring like one sea—
God save Elizabeth, our English Queen!
'God save her,' I say, too; but still she
dreams,
As all too many of us—bear with me!—
dream,
Of Creçy, when our England's war was thus;
When we, too, hurled our hosts across the
deep
As now Spain dreams to hurl them on our
isle.
But now our war is otherwise. We claim
The sea's command, and Spain shall never
land
One swordsman on our island. Blame
her not,
But look not to the Queen. The people
fight
This war of ours, not princes. In this hour
God maketh us a people. We have seen

Victories, never victory like to this,
When in our England's darkest hour of
need

Her seamen, without wage, powder, or food,
Are yet on fire to fight for her. Your ships
Tossing in the great sunset of an Empire,
Dawn of a sovereign people, are all manned
By heroes, ragged, hungry, who will die
Like flies ere long, because they have no
food

But turns to fever-breeding carrion
Not fit for dogs. They are half-naked,
hopeless

Living, of any reward; and if they die
They die a dog's death. We shall reap
the fame

While they—great God! and all this cannot
quench

The glory in their eyes. They will be
served

Six at the mess of four, eking it out
With what their own rude nets may catch
by night,
Silvering the guns and naked arms that haul
Under the stars with silver past all price,
While some small ship-boy in the black
crow's nest
Watches across the waters for the foe.
My lord, it is a terrible thing for Spain
When poor men thus go out against her
princes;
For so God whispers 'Victory' in our ears,
I cannot dare to doubt it."

Once again
A growl of fierce approval answered him,
And Hawkins cried—"I stand by Francis
Drake";
But Howard, clinging to his old-world order,
Yet with such manly strength as dared to
rank

Drake's wisdom of the sea above his own,
Sturdily shook his head. "I dare not risk
A close attack. Once grappled we are
doomed.

We'll follow on their trail no less, with
Drake

Leading. Our oriflamme to-night shall be
His cresset and stern-lanthorn. Where that
shines

We follow."

Drake, still thinking in his heart,—
"And if Spain be not shattered here and
now

We are doomed no less," must even rest
content

With that good vantage.

As the sunset died
Over the darkling emerald seas that swelled
Before the freshening wind, the pinnaces
dashed

To their own ships; and into the mind of
Drake

There stole a plot that twitched his lips to
a smile.

High on the heaving purple of the poop
Under the glimmer of firm and full-blown
sails

He stood, an iron statue, glancing back
Anon at his stern-cresset's crimson flare,
The star of all the shadowy ships that
plunged

Like ghosts amid the grey stream of his
wake,

And all around him heard the low keen song
Of hidden ropes above the wail and creak
Of blocks and long low swish of cloven foam,
A keen rope-music in the formless night,
A harmony, a strong intent good sound,
Well-strung and taut, singing the will
of man.

“Your oriflamme,” he muttered,—“so you
travail

With sea-speech in the tongue of old
Poictiers—

Shall be my own stern-lantern. Watch it
well,

My good lord Howard.”

Over the surging seas
The little *Revenge* went swooping on the
trail,

Leading the ships of England. One by one
Out of the gloom before them slowly crept,
Sinister gleam by gleam, like blood-red
stars,

The rearmost lanterns of the Spanish Fleet,
A shaggy purple sky of secret storm
Heaving from north to south upon the black
Breast of the waters. Once again with lips
Twitched to a smile, Drake suddenly bade
them crowd

All sail upon the little *Revenge*. She leapt
Forward. Smiling he watched the widening
gap
Between the ships that followed and her
light,
Then as to those behind, its flicker must
seem
Wellnigh confused with those of Spain,
he cried,
“ Now, master bo’sun, quench their oriflamme,
Dip their damned cresset in the good black
Sea!
The rearmost light of Spain shall lead
them now,
A little closer, if they think it ours.
Pray God, they come to blows!”
Even as he spake,
His cresset-flare went out in the thick
night:
A fluttering as of blind bewildered moths

A moment seized upon the shadowy ships
Behind him, then with crowded sail they
steered
Straight for the rearmost cresset-flare of
Spain.

BOOK XII.

MEANWHILE, as in the gloom he slipped
aside

Along the Spanish ranks, waiting the crash
Of battle, suddenly Drake became aware
Of strange sails bearing up into the wind
Around his right, and thought, "the Armada
strives

To weather us in the dark." Down went
his helm,

And all alone the little *Revenge* gave chase,
Till as the moon crept slowly forth, she stood
Beside the ghostly ships, only to see
Bewildered Flemish merchantmen, amazed
With fears of Armageddon—such vast shrouds

Had lately passed them on the rolling seas.
Down went his helm again, with one grim
curse

Upon the chance that led him thus astray;
And down the wind the little *Revenge* once
more

Swept on the trail. Fainter and fainter now
Glared the red beacons on the British coasts,
And the wind slackened and the glimmering
East

Greyed and reddened, yet Drake had not
regained

Sight of the ships. When the full glory of
dawn

Dazzled the sea, he found himself alone,
With one huge galleon helplessly drifting
A cable's-length away. Around her prow,
Nuestra Señora del Rosario,
Richly emblazoned, gold on red, proclaimed
The flagship of great Valdes, of the fleet

Of Andalusia, captain-general. She,
Last night, in dark collision with the hulks
Of Spain, had lost her foremast. Through
the night

Her guns, long rank on deadly rank, had kept
All enemies at bay. Drake summoned her
Instantly to surrender. She returned
A scornful answer from the glittering poop
Where two-score officers crowned the golden
sea

And stained the dawn with blots of richer
colour

Loftily clustered in the glowing sky,
Doubled with crimson velvet, wreathed
With golden chains, blazing with jewelled
swords

And crusted poignards. "What proud haste
was this?"

They asked, glancing at their huge tiers of
cannon

And crowded decks of swarthy soldiery;
"What madman in yon cockle-shell defied
Spain?"

"Tell them it is El Draque," he
said, "who lacks
The time to parley; therefore it will be well
They strike at once, for I am in great
haste."

There, at the sound of that renowned name,
Without a word down came their blazoned
flag!

Like a great fragment of the dawn it lay
Crumpled upon their decks. . . .

Into the soft bloom and Italian blue
Of sparkling, ever-beautiful Torbay,
Belted as with warm Mediterranean crags,
The little *Revenge* foamed with her mighty
prize,
A prize indeed—not for the casks of gold

Drake split in the rich sunlight and poured
out

Like dross amongst his men, but in her hold
Lay many tons of powder, worth their weight
In rubies now to Britain. Into the hands
Of swarthy Brixham fishermen he gave
Prisoners and prize, then—loaded stem to
stern

With powder and shot—their swiftest trawlers
flew

Like falcons following a thunder-cloud
Behind him, as with crowded sail he rushed
On England's trail once more. Like a caged
lion

Drake paced his deck, praying he yet might
reach

The fight in time; and ever the warm light
wind

Slackened. Not till the sun was half-way
fallen

Once more crept out in front those dusky
thrones

Of thunder, heaving on the smooth bright sea
From North to South with Howard's clustered fleet

Like tiny clouds, becalmed, not half a mile
Behind the Spaniards. For the breeze had failed

Their blind midnight pursuit ; and now attack
Seemed hopeless. Even as Drake drew nigh,
the last

Breath of the wind sank. One more day
had flown,

Nought was accomplished ; and the Armada
lay

Some leagues of golden sea-way nearer now
To its great goal. The sun went down : the
moon

Rose glittering. Hardly a cannon-shot apart
The two fleets lay becalmed upon the silver

Swell of the smooth night-tide. The hour
had come

For Spain to strike. The ships of England
drifted

Helplessly, at the mercy of those great hulks
Oared by their thousand slaves.

Onward they came,
Swinging suddenly in tremendous gloom
Over the silver seas. But even as Drake,
With eyes on fire at last for his last fight,
Measured the distance ere he gave the word
To greet it with his cannon, suddenly
The shining face of the deep began to shiver
With dusky patches: the doomed English
sails

Quivered and, filling smart from the North-
east,

The little *Revenge* rushed down their broken
line

Signalling them to follow, and ere they knew

What miracle had saved them, they all sprang
Their luff and ran large out to sea. For

now

The Armada lay to windward, and to fight
Meant to be grappled and overwhelmed; but

dark

Within the mind of Drake, a fiercer plan
Already had shaped itself.

“They fly! They fly!”

Rending the heavens from twice ten thousand
throats

A mighty shout rose from the Spanish Fleet.
Over the moonlit waves their galleons came
Towering, crowding, plunging down the wind
In full chase, while the tempter, Drake,
laughed low

To watch their solid battle-order break
And straggle. When once more the golden
dawn

Dazzled the deep, the labouring galleons lay

Scattered by their unequal speed. The wind
Veered as the sun rose. Once again the
ships

Of England lay to windward. Down swooped
Drake

Where like a mountain the *San Marcos* heaved
Her giant flanks alone, having out-sailed
Her huge companions. Then the sea-winds
blazed

With broadsides. Two long hours the sea
flamed red

All round her. One by one the Titan ships
Came surging to her rescue, and met the
buffet

Of battle-thunders, belching iron and flame;
Nor could they pluck her forth from that red
chaos

Till great Oquendo hurled his mighty prows
Crashing athwart those thunders, and once
more

Gathered into unshakeable battle-order
The whole Armada raked the reeking seas.
Then up the wind the ships of England
sheered
Once more, and one more day drew to its
close,
With little accomplished, half their powder
spent,
And all the Armada moving as of old,
From sky to sky one heaven-wide zone of
storm,
(Though some three galleons out of all their
host
Laboured woundily) down the darkening
Channel.
And all night long on England's guardian
heights
The beacons reddened, and all the next long
day
The impregnable Armada never swerved

From its tremendous path. In vain did
Drake,
Frobisher, Hawkins, Howard, greatest names
In all our great sea-history, hover and dart
Like falcons round the mountainous array.
Till now, as night fell and they lay abreast
Of the Isle of Wight, once more the council
flag
Flew from the little *Revenge*. With iron
face
Thrust close to Howard's, and outstretched
iron arm,
Under the stars Drake pointed down the
coast
Where the red beacons flared. "The shoals,"
he hissed,
"The shoals from Owers to Spithead and
the net
Of channels yonder in Portsmouth Roads.
At dawn

They'll lie to leeward of the Invincible
Fleet!"

Swiftly, in mighty sweeping lines Drake set
Before the council his fierce battle-plan
To drive the Armada down upon the banks
And utterly shatter it—stroke by well-schemed
stroke

As he unfolded there his vital plot
And touched their dead cold warfare into
life

Where plan before was none, he seemed to
tower

Above them, clad with the deep night of
stars;

And those that late would rival knew him
now,

In all his great simplicity, their king,
One of the gods of battle, England's Drake,
A soul that summoned Cæsar from his grave,
And swept with Alexander o'er the deep.

So when the dawn thro' rolling wreaths of
cloud

Struggled, and all the waves were molten
gold,

The heart of Spain exulted, for she saw
The little fleet of England cloven in twain
As if by some strange discord. A light breeze
Blew from the ripening East ; and, up against
it,

Urged by the very madness of defeat,
Or so it seemed, one half the British fleet
Drew nigh, towed by their boats, to chal-
lenge the vast

Tempest-winged heaving citadels of Spain,
At last to the murderous grapple ; while far
away

Their other half, led by the flag of Drake,
Stood out to sea, as if to escape the doom
Of that sheer madness, for the light wind
now

Could lend them no such wings to hover
and swoop

As heretofore. Nearer the mad ships came
Towed by their boats, till now upon their
right

To windward loomed the Fleet Invincible
With all its thunder-clouds, and on their left
To leeward, gleamed the perilous white shoals
With their long level lightnings under the
cliffs

Of England, from the green glad garden of
Wight

To the Owers and Selsea Bill. Right on
they came,

And suddenly the wrench of thundering
cannon

Shook the vast hulks that towered above
them. Red

Flamed the blue sea between. Thunder to
thunder

Answered, and still the ships of Drake sped
out

To the open sea. Sidonia saw them go,
Furrowing the deep that like a pale-blue
shield

Lay diamond-dazzled now in the full light.
Rich was the omen of that day for Spain,
The feast-day of Sidonia's patron-saint!
And the priests chanted and the trumpets blew
Triumphantly! A universal shout
Went skyward from the locust-swarming
decks,

A shout that rent the golden morning clouds
From heaven to menacing heaven, as castle
to castle

Flew the great battle-signal, and like one
range

Of moving mountains, those almighty ranks
Swept down upon the small forsaken ships!
The lion's brood was in the imperial nets

Of Rome at last. Onward the mountains
came

With all their golden clouds of sail and
flags

Like streaming cataracts; all their glorious
chasms

And glittering steeps, echoing, re-echoing,
Calling, answering, as with the herald winds
That blow the golden trumpets of the
morning

From Skiddaw to Helvellyn. In the midst
The great *San Martin* surged with heaven-
wide press

Of proudly billowing sail; and yet once more
Slowly, solemnly, like another dawn
Up to her mast-head soared in thunderous
gold

The sacred standard of their last crusade;
While round a hundred prows that heaved
thro' heaven

Like granite cliffs, their black wet shining
flanks,

And swept like moving promontories, rolled
The splendid long-drawn thunders of the
foam,

And flashed the untamed white lightnings of
the sea

Back to a morn unhalyarded of man,

Back to the unleashed sun and blazoned
clouds

And azure sky—the unfettered flag of God.

Like one huge moving coast-line on they
came

Crashing, and closed the ships of England
round

With one fierce crescent of thunder and
sweeping flame,

One crimson scythe of Death, whose long
sweep drowned

The eternal ocean with its mighty sound,
From heaven to heaven, one roar, one
glitter of doom,
While out to the sea-line's blue remotest bound
The ships of Drake still fled, and the red
fume
Of battle thickened and shrouded shoal and
sea with gloom.

The distant sea, the close white menacing
shoals
Are shrouded! And the lion's brood fight
on!
And now death's very midnight round them
rolls;
Rent is the flag that late so proudly shone:
The red decks reel and their last hope seems
gone!
Round them they still keep clear one ring
of sea:

It narrows; but the lion's brood fight on,
Ungrappled still, still fearless and still free,
While the white menacing shoals creep
slowly out to lee.

Now through the red rents of each fire-cleft
cloud,
High o'er the British blood-greased decks
flash out
Thousands of swarthy faces, crowd on crowd
Surging, with one tremendous hurricane
shout
On, to the grapple! and still the grim redoubt
Of the oaken bulwarks rolls them back
again,
As buffeted waves that shatter in the furious
bout
When cannonading cliffs meet the full main
And hurl it back in smoke,—so Britain hurls
back Spain;

Hurls her back, only to see her return,
Darkening the heavens with billow on
billow of sail :

Round that huge storm the waves like lava
burn,

The daylight withers, and the sea-winds
fail !

Seamen of England, what shall now avail
Your naked arms ? Before those blasts of
doom

The sun is quenched, the very sea-waves quail :
High overhead their triumphing thousands
loom,

When hark ! what low deep guns to wind-
ward suddenly boom ?

What low deep strange new thunders far away
Respond to the triumphant shout of Spain ?
Is it the wind that shakes their giant array ?
Is it the deep wrath of the rising main ?

Is it—*El Draque*? El Draque! Ay, shout
again,

His thunders burst upon your windward
flanks;

The shoals creep out to leeward! Is it plain
At last, what earthquake heaves your herded
ranks

Huddled in huge dismay tow'rds those white
foam-swept banks?

Plain, it was plain at last, what cunning lured,
What courage held them over the jaws o'
the pit,

Till Drake could hurl them down. The little
ships

Of Howard and Frobisher, towed by their
boats,

Slipped away in the smoke, while out at sea
Drake, with a gale of wind behind him,
crashed

Volley on volley into the helpless rear
Of Spain and drove it down, huddling the
whole

Invincible Fleet together upon the verge
Of doom. One awful surge of stormy wrath
Heaved thro' the struggling citadels of Spain.
From East to West their desperate signal
flew,

And like a drove of bullocks, with the foam
Flecking their giant sides, they staggered and
swerved,

Careening tow'rds the shallows as they turned,
Then in one wild stampede of sheer dismay
Rushed, tacking seaward, while the grey sea-
plain

Smoked round them, and the cannonades of
Drake

Raked their wild flight; and their crusad-
ing flag,

Tangled in one black maze of crashing spars,

Whirled downward like the pride of Lucifer
From heaven to hell.

Out tow'rds the coasts of France
They plunged, narrowly weathering the Ower
banks;

Then, once again, they formed in ranks
compact,

Roundels impregnable, wrathfully bent at last
Never to swerve again from their huge path
And solid end—to join with Parma's host,
And hurl the whole of Europe on our isle.
Another day was gone, much powder spent;
And, while Lord Howard exulted and conferred

Knighthoods on his brave seamen, Drake alone
Knew that his mighty plan, in spite of all,
Had failed, knew that wellnigh his last great
chance

Was lost of wrecking the Spaniards ere they
joined

Parma. The night went by, and the next day,
With scarce a visible scar the Invincible Fleet
Drew onward tow'rds its goal, unshakeable
now

In that grim battle-order. Beacons flared
Along the British coast, and pikes flashed out
All night, and a strange dread began to grip
The heart of England, as it seemed the might
Of seamen most renowned in all the world
Checked not that huge advance. Yet at the
heart

Of Spain no less there clung a vampire fear
And strange foreboding, as the next day
passed

Quietly, and behind her all day long
The shadowy ships of Drake stood on her trail
Quietly, patiently, as death or doom,
Unswerving and implacable.

While the sun
Sank thro' long crimson fringes on that eve,

The fleets were passing Calais and the wind
Blew fair behind them. A strange impulse
seized

Spain to shake off those bloodhounds from
her trail,

And suddenly the whole Invincible Fleet
Anchored, in hope the following wind would
bear

The ships of England past and carry them
down

To leeward. But their grim insistent watch
Was ready; and though their van had well-
nigh crashed

Into the rear of Spain, in the golden dusk,
They, too, a cannon-shot away, at once
Anchored, to windward still.

Quietly heaved

The golden sea in that tremendous hour
Fraught with the fate of Europe and mankind,
As yet once more the flag of council flew,

And Hawkins, Howard, Frobisher, and Drake
Gathered together upon the little *Revenge*,
While like a triumphing fire the news was
borne

To Spain, already, that the Invincible Fleet
Had reached its end, ay, and "that great
black dog

Sir Francis Drake" was writhing now in
chains

Beneath the torturer's hands.

High on his poop
He stood, a granite rock, above the throng
Of captains, there amid the breaking waves
Of clashing thought and swift opinion,
Silent, gazing where now the cool fresh wind
Blew steadily up the terrible North Sea
Which rolled under the clouds into a gloom
Unfathomable. Once only his lips moved
Half-consciously, breathing those mighty
words,

The clouds His chariot! Then, suddenly, he
turned

And looked upon the little flock of ships
That followed on the fleet of England, sloops
Helpless in fight. These, manned by the
brave zeal

Of many a noble house, from hour to hour
Had plunged out from the coast to join his
flag.

"Better if they had brought us powder and
food

Than sought to join us thus," he had
growled; but now

"Lord God," he cried aloud, "they'll light
our road

To victory yet!" And in great sweeping
strokes

Once more he drew his mighty battle-plan
Before the captains. In the thickening gloom
They stared at his grim face as at a man

Risen from hell, with all the powers of hell
At his command, a face tempered like steel
In the everlasting furnaces, a rock
Of adamant, while with a voice that blent
With the ebb and flow of the everlasting sea
He spake, and at the low deep menacing words
Monotonous with the unconquerable
Passion and level strength of his great soul
They shuddered; for the man seemed more
 than man,
And from his iron lips resounded doom
As from the lips of cannon, doom to Spain,
Inevitable, unconquerable doom.

And through that mighty host of Spain there
 crept

Cold winds of fear, as to the darkening sky
Once more from lips of kneeling thousands
 swept

The vespers of an Empire—one vast cry,

SALVE REGINA! God, what wild reply

Hissed from the clouds in that dark hour
of dreams?

AVE MARIA, *those about to die*

Salute thee! See, what ghostly pageant
streams

Above them? What thin hands point down
like pale moonbeams?

Thick as the ghosts that Dante saw in
hell

Whirled on the blast thro' boundless leagues
of pain,

Thick, thick as wind-blown leaves innumer-
able,

In the Inquisition's yellow robes her slain
And tortured thousands, dense as the red
rain

That wellnigh quenched her fires, went
hissing by

With twisted shapes, raw from the racks of
Spain,

SALVE REGINA!—rushing thro' the sky,
And pale hands pointing down and lips that
mocked her cry.

Ten thousand times ten thousand!—what are
these

That are arrayed in yellow robes and sweep
Between your prayers and God like phantom
seas

Prophesying over your masts? Could Rome
not keep
The keys? Who loosed these dead to break
your sleep?

SALVE REGINA, cry, yea, cry aloud,
AVE MARIA! Ye have sown: shall ye not reap?

SALVE REGINA! Christ, what fiery cloud
Suddenly rolls to windward, high o'er mast
and shroud?

Are hell-gates burst at last? For the black deep
To windward burns with streaming crimson
fires!

Over the wild strange waves, they shudder
and creep

Nearer—strange smoke-wreathed masts and
spars, red spires

And blazing hulks, vast roaring blood-red pyres,
Fierce as the flames ye fed with flesh
of men

Amid the imperial pomp and chanting choirs
Of Alva—from El Draque's red hand again
Sweep the wild fire-ships down upon the
Fleet of Spain.

Onward before the freshening wind they come
Full fraught with all the terrors, all the bale
That flamed so long for the delight of Rome,
The shrieking fires that struck the sunlight
pale,

The avenging fires at last! Now what avail
Your thousand ranks of cannon? Swift,
cut free,
Cut your scorched cables! Cry, reel back-
ward, quail,
Crash your huge huddled ranks together,
flee!
Behind you roars the fire, before—the dark
North Sea!

.
Dawn, everlasting and omnipotent
Dawn rolled in crimson o'er the spar-strewn
waves,
As the last trumpet shall in thunder roll
O'er heaven and earth and ocean. Far
away,
The ships of Spain, great raggéd piles of
gloom
And shaggy splendour, leaning to the North
Like sun-shot clouds confused, or rent apart

In scattered squadrons, furiously plunged,
Burying their mighty prows i' the broad
 grey rush
Of smoking billowy hills, or heaving high
Their giant bowsprits to the wandering
 heavens,
Labouring in vain to return, struggling to
 lock
Their far-flung ranks anew, but drifting still
To leeward, driven by the ever-increasing
 storm
Straight for the dark North Sea. Hard by
 there lurched
One gorgeous galleon on the ravening shoals,
Feeding the white maw of the famished
 waves
With gold and purple webs from kingly
 looms
And spilth of world-wide empires. Howard,
 still

Planning to pluck the Armada plume by
plume,
Swooped down upon that prey and swiftly
engaged
Her desperate guns ; while Drake, our ocean-
king,
Knowing the full worth of that doom-fraught
hour,
Glanced neither to the left nor right, but
stood
High on his poop, with calm implacable face
Gazing as into eternity, and steered
The crowded glory of his dawn-flushed sails
In superb onset, straight for the great fleet
Invincible ; and after him the main
Of England's fleet, knowing its captain now,
Followed, and with them rushed — from sky
to sky
One glittering charge of wrath—the storm's
white waves,

The twenty thousand foaming chariots
Of God.

None but the everlasting voice
Of him who fought at Salamis might sing
The fight of that dread Sabbath. Not
mankind

Waged it alone. War raged in heaven that
day,

Where Michael and his angels drave once
more

The hosts of darkness ruining down the abyss
Of chaos. Light against darkness, Liberty
Against all dark old despotism, unsheathed
The sword in that great hour. Behind the
strife

Of men embattled deeps beyond all thought
Moved in their awful panoply, as move
Silent, invisible, swift, under the clash
Of waves and flash of foam, huge ocean-
glooms

And vast reserves of inappellable power.
The bowsprits ranked on either fore-front
seemed
But spear-heads of those dread antagonists
Invisible: the shuddering sails of Spain
Dusk with the shadow of death, the sun-
ward sails
Of England full-fraught with the breath
of God.
Onward the ships of England and God's
waves
Triumphantly charged, glittering companions,
And poured their thunders on the extreme
right
Of Spain, whose giant galleons as they
lurched
Heavily to the roughening sea and wind
With all their grinding, wrenching cannon,
worked
On rolling platforms by the helpless hands

Of twenty thousand soldiers, without skill
In stormy seas, rent the indifferent sky
Or tore the black troughs of the swirling
 deep
In vain, while volley on volley of flame and
 iron
Burst thro' their four-foot beams, fierce rak-
 ing blasts
From ships that came and went on wings of
 the wind
All round their mangled bulk, scarce a pike's
 thrust
Away, sweeping their decks from stem to stern
(Between the rush and roar of the great
 green waves)
With crimson death, rending their timbered
 towns
And populous floating streets into wild squares
Of slaughter and devastation; driving them
 down,

Huddled on their own centre, cities of shame
And havoc, in fiery forests of tangled wrath,
With hurricanes of huge masts and swarming
spars

And multitudinous decks that heaved and sank
Like earthquake-smitten palaces, when doom
Comes, with one stride, across the pomp of
kings.

All round them shouted the everlasting sea,
Burst in white thunders on the streaming
poops

And blinded fifty thousand eyes with spray.
Once, as a gorgeous galleon, drenched with
blood

Began to founder and settle, a British captain
Called from his bulwarks, bidding her fierce
crew

Surrender and come aboard. Straight through
the heart

A hundred muskets answered that appeal.

Sink or destroy! The deadly signal flew
From mast to mast of England. Once,
twice, thrice,
A huge sea-castle heaved her haggled bulk
Heavenward, and with a cry that rent the
heavens
From all her crowded decks, and one deep
roar
As of a cloven world or the dark surge
Of chaos yawning, sank: the swirling slopes
Of the sweeping billowy hills for a moment
swarmed
With struggling insect-men, sprinkling the
foam
With tossing arms; then the indifferent sea
Rolled its grey smoking waves across the place
Where they had been. Here a great galleasse
poured
Red rivers through her scuppers and torn
flanks,

And there a galleon, wrapped in creeping fire,
Suddenly like a vast volcano split

Asunder, and o'er the vomiting sulphurous
clouds

And spouting spread of crimson, flying spars
And heads torn from their trunks and scattered limbs

Leapt, hideous gouts of death, against the
glare.

Hardly the thrust of a pike away, the ships
Of England flashed and swerved, till in one
mass

Of thunder-blasted splendour and shuddering
gloom

Those gorgeous floating citadels huddled and
shrank

Their towers, and all the glory of dawn that
rolled

And burned along the tempest of their banners
Withered, as on a murderer's face the light

Withers before the accuser. All their proud
Castles and towers and heaven-wide clouds
of sail

Shrank to a darkening horror, like the heart
Of Evil, plucked from midnight's fiercest
gloom,

With all its curses quivering and alive;
A horror of wild masts and tangled spars,
Like some great kraken with a thousand
arms

Torn from the filthiest cavern of the deep,
Writhing, and spewing forth its venomous
fumes

On every side. *Sink or destroy!*—all day
The deadly signal flew; and ever the sea
Swelled higher, and the flashes of the foam
Broadened and leapt and spread as a wild
white fire

That flourishes with the wind; and ever the
storm

Drave the grim battle onward to the wild
Menace of the dark North Sea. At set
of sun,

Even as below the sea-line the broad disc
Sank like a red-hot cannon-ball through scurf
Of seething molten lead, the *Santa Maria*
Uttering one cry that split the heart of
heaven

Went down with all hands, roaring into the
dark.

Hardly five rounds of shot were left to Drake!
Gun after gun fell silent, as the night
Deepened—"Yet we must follow them to the
North,"

He cried, "or they'll return yet to shake
hands

With Parma! Come, we'll put a brag upon it,
And hunt them onward as we lacked for
nought!"

So, when across the swinging smoking seas,

Grey and splendid and terrible broke the day
Once more, the flying Invincible fleet beheld
Upon their weather-beam, and dogging them
Like their own shadow, the dark ships of
Drake,

Unswerving and implacable. Ever the wind
And sea increased ; till now the heaving deep
Swelled all around them into sulky hills
And rolling mountains, whose majestic crests,
Like wild white flames far blown and savagely
flickering,

Swept thro' the clouds ; and, on their vanish-
ing slopes,

Past the pursuing fleet began to swirl
Scores of horses and mules, drowning or
drowned,

Cast overboard to lighten the wild flight
Of Spain, and save her water-casks, a trail
Telling of utmost fear. And ever the storm
Roared louder across the leagues of rioting sea,

Driving her onward like a mighty stag
Chased by the wolves. Off the dark Firth
of Forth

At last, Drake signalled and lay head to wind,
Watching. "The chariots of God are twenty
thousand,"

He muttered, as, for a moment close at hand,
Caught in some league-wide whirlpool of the
sea,

The mighty galleons crowded and towered
and plunged

Above him on the huge o'erhanging billows,
As if to crash down on his decks; the next,
A mile of ravening sea had swept between
Each of those wind-whipt straws and they
were gone,

With all their tiny shrivelling scrolls of sail,
Through roaring deserts of embattled death,
Where like a hundred thousand chariots
charged

With lightnings and with thunders, the great
 deep
Hurled them away to the North. From sky
 to sky
One blanching bursting storm of infinite seas
Followed them, broad white cataracts, hills
 that grasped
With struggling Titan hands at reeling
 heavens,
And roared their doom-fraught greetings from
 Cape Wrath
Round to the Bloody Foreland.

 There should the yeast
Of foam receive the purple of many kings,
And the grim gulfs devour the blood-bought
 gold
Of Aztecs and of Incas, and the reefs,
League after league, bristle with mangled
 spars,
And all along their coasts the murderous kerns

Of Catholic Ireland strip the gorgeous silks
And chains and jewel-encrusted crucifixes
From thousands dead, and slaughter thou-
sands more

With gallow-glass axes as they blindly crept
Forth from the surf and jagged rocks to seek
Pity of their own creed.

To meet that doom
Drake watched their sails go shrivelling, till
the last

Flicker of spars vanished as a skeleton leaf
Upon the blasts of winter, and there was
nought

But one wide wilderness of splendour and
gloom

Under the northern clouds.

“Not unto us,”

Cried Drake, “not unto us—but unto Him
Who made the sea, belongs our England
now!

THE LOOM OF YEARS.

By ALFRED NOYES.

PRESS OPINIONS.

The Times.—Extraordinary promise.....His singing puts one in mind of the lads commemorated in Stevenson's alcaics :—

“ Brave lads in olden musical centuries
Sang, night by night, adorable choruses,
Sat late by alehouse doors in April
Chanting in joy as the moon was rising.”

The Standard.—Mr Noyes is something of a symbolist and something of a mystic. Several of his poems breathe that strange yearning for the Infinite and the elusive, that

“ Desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,”

which is perceptible in so much that is most interesting in the contemporary poetry of England and France. It is characteristic of the whole school that, like their exemplar, Shelley, they are studiously and deliberately vague. Sometimes they are apt to become so esoteric that only the initiated can understand them. This, however, is not the case with Mr Noyes, whose style is lucid and simple.

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W. G. C.

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